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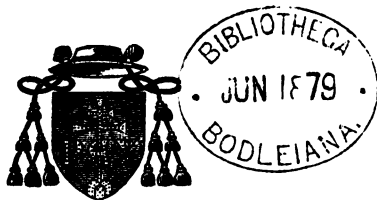
SHORT MEDITATIONS

FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR, INTENDED CHIEFLY FOR
THE USE OF RELIGIOUS, BY AN ANONYMOUS
ITALIAN AUTHOR.

Translated by
DOM EDMUND J. LUCK, O.S.B.,
PRIEST OF THE CASSINESE CONGREGATION OF THE
PRIMITIVE OBSERVANCE.

Prefaced by a Recommendation from
HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL MANNING.

VOL. I.



LONDON:
R. WASHBOURNE, 18 PATERNOSTER ROW.
1879.

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To
THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS,
THE SUPPORT AND THE REWARD
OF THE TRIALS AND OF THE CONFLICTS
OF THOSE
WHO PROFESS ON EARTH
PERPETUAL POVERTY, CHASTITY, AND OBEDIENCE,
THIS TRANSLATION
Is Adoringly Dedicated and Lovingly Commended
BY
THE TRANSLATOR,
WITH THE HUMBLE PRAYER
THAT HIS LABOURS MAY PROVE TO BE
AN INSTRUMENT OF GRACE FOR THE SANCTIFICATION
OF SOULS, AND A MEANS OF FURTHERING
THE GLORY OF HIM WHO IS
DEUS BENEDICTUS IN SÆCULA.

PREFACE.

THE "Annus Liturgicus" of Dom Gueranger has beautifully illustrated the wisdom of the Church in its yearly round of Sacred Seasons, and in the ever-varying sweetness and significance of its Solemnities and Feasts. In every year the whole Revelation of Faith returns, mystery by mystery, dogma by dogma, precept by precept, upon our intelligence and upon our hearts. The *Lex credendi* is the *Lex orandi*, and the worship of the Church preaches to the world without, and to the faithful within the Sanctuary. To those that are without, it is a visible and audible witness for the kingdom of God: to those that are within, it is a foresight and a foretaste of the beauty and the sweetness of the worship of eternity.

If preachers will follow the Church as it moves year by year in the cycle of eternal truths, and will explain pastorally in simple and manly words the Epistles and Gospels by which the Church, or rather the Holy Ghost, teaches us the meaning of Feast and Fast as they come and go, they will year by year declare to

their flocks the whole counsel of God, and keep back nothing which is for their perfection. Not so when texts are chosen at random and sermons are preached without continuity or relation to the fulness and unity of faith.

What is true of sermons is true likewise of meditations. The best Manuals of Meditation for general use are those that attach themselves to the Church as it moves through the Liturgical year, and follow in its course. Such Manuals enable preachers to expound the mind of the Church in all its Festivals, and prepare the faithful to receive their teaching with a readier and more complete understanding.

The present Manual is one of this kind : full of a simple and homely exposition of the eternal truths in which and by which we must live and persevere to a holy death. Every one, in every state in the world, in the Priesthood, and in the Cloister, will find in it what is enough for Christian perfection : for perfection consists in the love of God and our neighbour. In charity is all perfection : out of it is none : for "*God is Charity, and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him,*" now and in eternity.

HENRY EDWARD,
Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

EPIPHANY, 1879.

DECRETUM.

CUM opus cui titulus *Short Meditations, etc.*, a R. P. D. Joanne Edmundo Luck, Congregationis nostræ Presbytero digestum, a duobus ejusdem Congregationis Theologis, quibus id rei demandavimus, recognitum fuerit atque probatum, nos his literis facultatem concedimus, qua typis edi possit, servatis servandis.

In quorum fidem, etc.

Datum Sublaci ex Proto-Cœnobio S. Scholasticæ.

VIII. Kal. Decembris, 1878.

✠ Loco Sigilli. D. RAPHAEL TESTA, O.S.B.
Congr. Cass. a Primæv. Observ. Ab. Genlis.

TO THE READER.

IN introducing these "Short Meditations" to the religious of English-speaking communities, the translator feels that he cannot do better than give here the short but pleasing notice prefixed to the original Italian by its pious author. It is as follows :

"Meditation on Gospel truths and eternal maxims is that heavenly dew which waters and strengthens all virtues. Those who have made profession of a religious life have the greater need of this dew, inasmuch as by reason of their profession they have obliged themselves to the practice of a more elevated degree of virtue. With this end in view, I offer you the present compendium of Meditations, taken in part from the 'Manna of the Soul' of Father Paul Segneri,

and especially adapted to the requirements of your holy state, but in a condensed form, in order that they may be more practical, and consequently of greater profit.

“The Meditations are arranged according to the order of the Sundays as they occur, with the exception of those for Christmas-tide, up to the Octave of the Epiphany. These follow the date of the month, in order that the connection between the different mysteries of the holy infancy of Our Lord might not be interrupted. At the same time it is in nowise necessary to bind yourself to the order I have set down ; but you can select those Meditations which you perceive to be more fitted for your spiritual requirements. I have endeavoured so to dispose the matter, that every week there shall be some fresh matter for meditation on the four last things, as these great truths are the groundwork of that religious perfection I wish, and pray of Almighty God, that you may attain.”

The humility of the writer of these lines hindered him from leaving his name to posterity : nor is it necessary to enter upon a critical discussion as to who the author may have been—*laus erit unicuique a Deo.*

Suffice it to say, that his words breathe the Spirit of God, and the subjects he proposes for meditation are gospel truths in their pristine freshness and beauty, applicable alike to all the chosen ones of Our Lord's household, be they engaged with Mary at Jesus' feet, or with Martha in the duties of active life. In these pages, the members of all the numerous religious families, without distinction, that flourish in the Church of God, will find the grand and broad foundation of that religious perfection which is essentially common to all, clearly and practically declared. The author makes no secret of having availed himself of the labours of Father Paul Segneri in the compilation of his book ; but lack of originality is hardly a stigma in the treatment of such truths as death, judgment, hell, and heaven, and of the mysteries of Our Lord's life and death.

Confident in the worth and merit of the original work, the translator freely owns that his English rendering of it does not do justice to the terse quaintness and charming unction of the original, and to this cause must be attributed the shortcomings

that will doubtless be discoverable in the present translation.

In conclusion, it is the translator's duty and privilege to testify here his humble thanks and sincere estimation of the honour so kindly accorded to his lowly labours by the valued recommendation prefixed to this translation by so distinguished a Prince of the Church as His Eminence Cardinal Manning, the illustrious Archbishop of Westminster and Primate of England —whom God preserve !

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SHORT MEDITATIONS

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

Videbunt Filium hominis venientem in nube cum potestate magna et majestate.—Luc. xxi. 27.

They shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.

I. CONSIDER that the Church proposes to-day for thy consideration the last judgment, as a preparation for the birth of Christ ; and this for three reasons : the first is that thou mayest prepare thyself to receive Him with tender affection and, at the same time, with reverential awe : with tender affection, since He manifests Himself in His birth as a babe in swaddling-clothes, poor and forsaken, lying in a manger, whilst at the same time He comes to be thy Redeemer ; with reverential awe, because, as thou well knowest, He will return not long hence *cum potestate magna et majestate*—with great power and majesty to be thy supreme Judge, without appeal, in the valley of Josaphat. Think, then, seriously on these two comings of thy Saviour : the one in humility, the other in majesty ; the one in love, the other in rigorous justice. In the first He presents Himself as an infant weeping on the

prickly straw, for thy sake ; in the second He will be thy Judge, and will pass on thee a sentence which will either admit thee to eternal joy in His kingdom, or condemn thee to the wailing of an eternal death. By this means thou wilt receive Him with great love and with great respect. The son of a monarch, though but an infant, is respected at court, not only on account of what he actually is, but much more by reason of what he will be. Do thou also act in like manner towards the infant Jesus.

II. Consider the second motive why the Church places before thee the last judgment, to prepare thee for the birth of Christ. It is, that as Jesus is coming now, to teach thee, both by doctrine and by example, to despise all worldly greatness and to embrace evangelical poverty, thou mayest the more easily grasp these truths, so little understood by the generality of men, by reflecting on what will be the end of all the glory and riches of earth on the judgment day, when everything will be reduced to ashes by a withering fire, and when he alone will triumph and be rich who now flies from, and treads under foot, the possessions of the world to follow Christ. What different parts will not poor Lazarus and the rich glutton play on that stage ! and what appearance wilt thou make ? Oh how thoroughly wilt thou understand these truths on thy deathbed, when shortly the whole world will be dead to thee, and thou wilt never see it again until the last day when thou shalt behold it reduced to ashes.

III. Consider the third reason why the Church proposes for thy consideration the terrors of the last judgment at this season, and it is, that since in this His first advent thy Saviour lays open to thee a mercy-seat of grace, and in His second will erect a judgment-seat of most rigorous justice, thou mayest by a seasonable recourse to the throne of grace enjoy the effects of His mercy now, so that thou mayest not, in His

second coming, have to experience the rigours of His justice. Extreme, indeed, will the rigour of His justice be in the valley of Josaphat. *Judicabo te juxta vias tuas et non parces oculus meus super te et non miserebor.*—Ezech. vii. 3.—*I will judge thee according to thy ways, and my eye shall not spare thee, and I will show thee no pity.* But it is also true that now His mercy is equally great in the stable of Bethlehem. *Adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiæ, ut quem redemptorem læti suscipimus, venientem quoque judicem securi videamus*—as the Church exhorts us in the collect for Christmas Eve—*let us approach with confidence the throne of grace, so that we may be able to meet Him without fear as our Judge, whom we now welcome with joyful hearts as our Redeemer.*

MONDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT.

Nolo mortem impii, sed ut convertatur impius et vivat.
—Ezech. xxxiii. 11.

I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.

I. CONSIDER how, although Almighty God made a terrible display of His justice at the first offence, in the case of the rebel angels, He has nevertheless chosen to display His mercy in favour of the human race, doomed to eternal death by the original sin of Adam, and still more by the sins of each individual; and this He wished to do in order to show that He is at once *misericors et justus*—*merciful and just.* Can it be that thou wilt not love this infinite goodness of thy God, who without any interest of His own has deigned to show such great mercy towards mankind, and has lavished on thee in particular the most abundant

proofs of His love? What would God have lost in losing so petty a creature as thee—aye, and the whole human race as well—when the perdition of so many hosts of angels has not diminished His glory one tittle? The very least thou canst do is to thank Him from thy heart for showing towards thee, and every one individually, that same profusion of mercy which He displayed in redeeming the whole of mankind, just as though thou hadst been the only one to be redeemed.

II. Consider how awfully rigorous the justice of Almighty God was against the seduced angels, inasmuch as for their very first sin, and that of thought only, they were all involved in the sentence of eternal damnation, and hurled in the twinkling of an eye into the depths of hell. In man's regard, on the contrary, Almighty God has chosen to manifest unlimited mercy, in order that the magnificence of His divine attributes might be the more conspicuous. He might in many other ways have provided against our eternal ruin—either by a free pardon of our sins or by taking to Himself, to this end, the angelic nature. But no, He wished at all costs to apply the remedy by becoming man, in order that as God-man He might offer the fullest satisfaction for our debts to the injured justice of God, and in order that human nature might behold itself raised from the depth of so great misery to the right hand of the Eternal Father. If thou knowest not how to praise Him as He deserves for so great mercy, unite thy praises with those of the angelic spirits, who, astounded at the glory of God so singularly displayed in this mystery, unceasingly exclaim : *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus : plena est omnis terra gloria ejus*—Isaias vi. 3—*Holy, Holy, Holy : all the earth is filled with His glory.*

III. Consider how, after that God has shown such stupendous mercy towards men, He does not for all that refrain from exercising on those who unworthily

abuse it the rigors of His justice, which will be so much the severer in proportion as the opportunities of availing themselves of His mercy have been great. Thy Saviour has brought thee to a knowledge of this great mystery in the bright light of faith; He has caused thee to be born in the very heart of Christendom, and has called thee by so many and clear interior lights to His own school to become His follower and disciple. Unless thou takest advantage of these precious gifts, denied to so many more worthy than thou art, fear, indeed, the rigours of His justice: and if thou fearest not, woe to thee—it is a bad sign.

TUESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT.

Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret.—Joan. iii. 16.

God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son.

I. CONSIDER what a great wonder it is that God should love anything besides Himself, since He contains in Himself in an infinite degree whatever good there possibly can be outside Himself. Yet it is a greater wonder still, that from all eternity He should have loved, and should still love, the world—that is to say, the human race—with the tender affection of a fond father, whilst at the same time He has never seen aught else in man but the blackest ingratitude and the most wanton wickedness. And yet is there not, perchance, a still greater prodigy to be discovered in thine own person when thou reflectest that, not having one grain of good in thy own self, but having everything in God, thou nevertheless dost not show one particle of love for thy Saviour Who so loves thee, but lovest thyself only.

II. Consider to what excesses the love of God towards thee has actually carried Him. *Sic dilexit, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret—He has so loved, as to give His only begotten Son.* What more couldst thou picture to thyself? To give for thy ransom, not a man, not an angel, not a seraph, but an only begotten Son, not adopted, but natural and consubstantial, inasmuch as the divine Son is one and the same with the Father in His substance, and distinct in His person only. Moreover, in giving thee Jesus Christ, He proposes to give thee all that good which is in Christ as man, as God, and as Man-God. *Proprio Filio suo non pepercit sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum, quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit?—Rom. viii. 32—He spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?* And thou, wilt thou not be willing to make an offering of even a vile passion to this thy Saviour, Who with so great love has favoured thee so highly?

III. Consider that it would have been a proof of even great love in thy regard, if the Eternal Father had given thee His Son, only that He might reign on earth, and receive the tribute of man's homage, at the same time giving laws and explaining to men His heavenly doctrines. But is it not the greatest of wonders that He should have given Him over to die and to suffer for the salvation of man? *Ut servum redimeres, Filium tradidisti—the Church sings on Holy Saturday—to redeem a slave, Thou hast delivered up Thy Son.* That thou mightest be capable of partaking of the divine nature, He has lowered His divinity to the level of poor humanity; to free thee from the death of sin and of eternal punishment, He has consented that His only begotten Son should die a death the most ignominious and painful. After thou hast appreciated this boundless excess of love and the astounding degradation to which thy Saviour has submitted,

wilt thou persist in being so proud as not to be willing to undergo for love of Him some little diminution of thy own reputation ?

WEDNESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT.

Ecce dedi eum ducem et præceptorem Gentibus.—
Isaias lv. 4.

I have given Him for a leader and a master to the Gentiles.

I. CONSIDER the miserable condition to which the human race was reduced previous to the coming of the Redeemer. Man was buried in a complete mental blindness, without the knowledge either of his end or of his Creator : his will was perverted by the unswayed passions of his corrupt nature ; he was tyrannised over by the devil, who kept him plunged, as it were, in a sink of vice, making him adore as gods the most villanous of men, and even himself. Reflect, now, a little what would have become of thee hadst thou been born into the world during so unfortunate and lamentable a period. And yet, how little mindful art thou to thank thy Lord, Who has allowed thee to come into existence at an epoch when thou mayest know thy end, and Who at the same time has afforded thee so many means and helps to attain it, of all which even at the present day, so large a proportion of mankind is deprived amongst heathen nations.

II. Consider that, in order to relieve mankind that was labouring under so great disadvantages, the Eternal Father has given thee His own Son to be thy leader and master, so that by His doctrine He might enlighten thy darkness, and by His example lead thee on to the

attainment of eternal salvation, and so encourage thee to fight manfully against thy enemies. Oh what an immense benefit is not this ! but, alas, little esteemed by men, who prefer to follow the maxims of the world rather than the teaching of Christ—the enticements of the flesh and the deception of the evil one, rather than the invitations and examples of their Redeemer. Weep over such great blindness, but at the same time reflect on thy own conduct so as not to be found thyself one day in the unfortunately numerous company of these ungrateful ones.

III. Consider the titles which oblige thee to embrace the teaching and follow the example of Christ. In the first place, as a Christian, at thy baptism thou hast renounced the slavery of the world, the flesh and the devil, and hast enrolled thyself amongst the followers of Christ ; and, as such, thou oughtest to follow in the footsteps of thy master. Secondly, as a religious, thou hast enrolled thyself amongst His soldiers and most intimate friends, and as such thou art under the strictest obligation to imitate Him and fight under His standard against His enemies. What a disgrace, then, would it not be if thou, the servant, soldier, and friend of Jesus, should, instead of following Him, be ashamed of imitating His example : and instead of fighting on His side, shouldst enter into a league with His enemies. Reflect, therefore, whether in thy manner of acting and living thou conformest thy conduct to the sayings of the world or to the maxims of the gospel, to the instigations of the devil or to the example of Christ.

THURSDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT.

Debuit per omnia fratribus assimilari, ut misericors fieret.—Heb. ii. 17.

It behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become merciful.

I. CONSIDER that though the Divine Son clothed Himself with human flesh to work out our redemption in obedience to His Eternal Father, still He could have taken a body that was glorious and already perfect, without subjecting Himself to the weaknesses and sufferings of infancy; and yet, notwithstanding all this, He chose to be born an infant, like ourselves, for our greater instruction and benefit. *Debuit per omnia assimilari—It behoved Him to be made like unto us in all things:* so that seeing Him like unto ourselves by means of this great humiliation, we might the more easily be moved to imitate Him, and liken ourselves unto Him. Reflect, therefore, on this, since all thy progress and all thy perfection is reduced to this one thing—to liken thyself to thy Creator, who made Himself like unto thee to be thy Redeemer.

II. Consider that the first thing in which thou oughtest to imitate thy Jesus, is to become a child. Christ says to His disciples: *Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum cœlorum*—Matth. xviii. 3—*Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And if it be necessary to become a little one, merely to save one's own soul, one must needs become an infant to attain to religious perfection. But what is the meaning of becoming an infant? It means living entirely in the arms of Divine Providence, and allowing oneself to be guided by obedience, laying aside every care and solicitude about

one's self, just like a babe in the arms of its mother. This is the true way of tasting the milk of divine consolation. Whenever thou experiencest any difficulty in having to lead a life so bound up by rules, and dependent on the will of another, think what a much greater hardship it was for Jesus to remain nine months confined in His Mother's womb, endowed all the time with the use of His senses and of His reason. This was the first suffering that Christ endured for thee : and this is likewise the first step for thee to take if thou wishest to climb the ladder of perfection.

III. Consider that Jesus not only became an infant, but chose, moreover, to be born of a Mother, so that whilst coming to be one of ourselves and our brother, His Mother might likewise become our Mother ; and that just as Eve concurred together with Adam in causing our ruin, so also the Divine Son and the Mother might concur in procuring our salvation. The Son is, as it were, the head ; the Mother, the neck ; the Son, the judge ; the Mother, the pleader ; the Son, our advocate with His Father ; the Mother, our advocate with her Son. Ah, what pledges are not these of the exceeding love of our Redeemer ! See that thou availlest thyself of them by having recourse to Mary in every necessity and by calling to thy assistance her who by being Mother of thy Saviour is at the same time the Mother of thy Salvation : *In angustiiis, in periculis, Mariam invoca, Mariam cogita ; non recedat ab ore non recedat a corde*—*In troubles and dangers call on Mary, think on Mary : let not her name depart from thy lips nor from thy heart*, says S. Bernard.

FRIDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT.

Elegit eam Deus et præelegit eam.—Offic. B. M. V.
God hath chosen her and singled her out.—Offic. B. M. V.

I. CONSIDER how when once it was decreed that the Redeemer should be born of a mother, it was determined in the consistory of the Most August Trinity who was to be chosen for so exalted a dignity. Who would not have thought that the person selected for so sublime an office would have been the most influential and most honoured woman that could be found on earth? And yet how far from the judgment of man is that of God, who chose for the Mother of the Most High a woman, unknown to all, and the spouse of a poor labouring carpenter! Is not this sufficient to make thee understand in what little account Almighty God holds that worldly greatness which is so much esteemed by men? A poor ragged beggar, who possesses one single degree of grace, is, in the eyes of Almighty God, a thousand times more worthy of esteem than any or the greatest monarch of this world, without His grace; and every least virtuous action, as, for example, the giving of a glass of water for love of God, is worth more than all the goods of talent, science, birth, and riches.

II. Consider that Almighty God, knowing from all eternity every being that could possibly exist, and everything that each one would have performed in every possible state of life, cast His eyes upon the Virgin Mary, who, by virtue of the grace conferred upon her, would, through the merits of Jesus, have fully corresponded to the gifts of God, and under all circumstances have acted with the greatest perfection, submitting herself in everything to the Divine Will with complete resignation and humility: *Respexit humilitatem ancillæ*

succ—Luc. i. 48—*He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaid.* Thus was Mary chosen to this great dignity of Mother of the world's Redeemer. Rejoice in thy own heart that so high an honour is hers; and reflect, meanwhile, that thou also mayest in a certain sense become mother of God by doing in all things the Will of God, according to that saying of Christ: *Qui fecerit voluntatem Patris mei, hic frater meus et soror mea et mater est*—Marc. iii. 35—*Whosoever shall do the Will of My Father, he is My brother and My sister and mother.*

III. Consider that Almighty God always dispenses His gifts in proportion to the duties He imposes. Now as the dignity of Mother of God is so sublime, belonging as it does to an order of things altogether beyond the order of creation (*sua operatione fines divinitatis attingit*—S. Thomas), it was determined to confer on the Blessed Virgin gifts of grace superior to those of any other creature. Learn hence that when God through the ministry of thy superiors imposes on thee some occupation, for which in thy own opinion thou hast neither talent enough nor strength enough—learn, I say, to trust in Heaven for the necessary help, for our Lord always gives with a responsible post the necessary ability.

SATURDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT.

Sapientia edificavit sibi domum.—Prov. ix. 1.
Wisdom hath built herself a house.

I. CONSIDER the privileges of the Blessed Virgin contained in the words just quoted: *Sapientia edificavit sibi domum*—*Wisdom hath built herself a house.* The Blessed Virgin is the Incarnate Word's own house,

built by the wisdom of God for His own dwelling-place; hence it is that He never suffered the devil to set foot in this dwelling and take possession of it previously to His own coming there. If the devil was not allowed to draw near after the Incarnation of the Word, much less was this permitted him before that period, since the Blessed Virgin was redeemed in a most especial manner from original sin by preventing grace, which preserved her from all sin and exempted her from concupiscence. Do thou, who unfortunately hast incurred original sin, and committed so many other sins through thy own fault, heartily beseech the Blessed Virgin to obtain for thee from the infinite mercy of God a true sorrow and entire pardon of all thy sins, in virtue of this her own great privilege.

II. Consider that the Divine Wisdom was not content with simply removing every stain of sin from her who was to be a dwelling worthy of a God, but that He, moreover, adorned her from the very first moment of her existence with an amount of grace greater than even the most illustrious saint ever possessed at the last moment of his life, according to those words: *Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis*—Ps. lxxxvi.—*Her foundations are in the holy mountains*, which means that this building, which is Mary, was destined to attain a great height, and rise incomparably higher than all the saints, on whose highest elevation her foundations commence, for she begins where the others finish. Congratulate the Blessed Virgin on her immense capital of grace, and beg her to obtain for thee, in her quality of dispenser of all graces, some relief for thy own extreme poverty.

III. Consider that the Blessed Virgin never allowed this immense capital of grace to lie idle, but continued doubling it at every instant, because as she was freed from concupiscence and all the difficulties of corrupt nature, she performed every act of virtue in

the most intense and perfect degree, so that throughout the whole course of her life, at each act of her will, she doubled the whole capital of grace within her, and has thus become richer in grace than all the citizens of heaven together. Oh what immense riches ! And why dost thou, who art provided with such a poor and scanty capital, keep it lying idle ? Generally speaking, the poorer a man is, the more industrious he is ; but with thee it is just the reverse. After so many years of religious life, what treasures hast thou laid up of merit and virtue ? Rouse thyself once for all from thy sloth, if thou dost not wish at the hour of death to hear pronounced against thee that reproach addressed in the gospel to the slothful servant who, because he had received fewer talents, kept them idly hidden in the ground.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

Quid existis in desertum videre ?—Matt. xi. 7.

What went you out into the desert to see ?

I. CONSIDER in this day's gospel the prerogatives of S. John, of which Our Lord spoke in such high terms of commendation, to the end that thou mightest recopy them in thyself. The first is his firmness and constancy in the path of virtue he had entered upon. —*Quid existis in desertum videre ? arundinem vento agitatam ?—What went you out into the desert to see ? a reed shaken with the wind ?* From his tenderest years he had continued to live in the desert, without ever quitting that solitude ; not even for the pleasure of once enjoying Our Lord's company. He persevered in a like tenor of life, both in the court of Herod and in prison, the solidity of his virtue being such as to be proof against all trials. Dost thou resemble him ;

or rather, art thou not a reed blown about in every direction by the slightest puff of wind? Dost thou remain constant to thy good resolutions, and to thy exercises of piety? How often at every little difficulty or slight opposition thou forsakest the good thou hadst commenced!—*Esto firmus in via Domini.*—Eccl. v. 12—*Be steadfast in the way of the Lord.*

II. Consider the second prerogative of S. John, which was that of uniting in himself the greatest innocence with the most rigorous penance and austerity of life. His clothing consisted of a camel's skin; his food was little else but wild herbs and locusts, and his necessary sleep he took on the bare ground. In what degree art thou given to the practice of mortification, in satisfaction for thy sins, and to bring thy stubborn and rebellious flesh into subjection? Oh, how thou deceivest thyself if thou imaginest it to be easy to acquire virtue and taste spiritual delights so long as thou seekest thine ease and pamperest thy flesh! Now, before God, what mortification dost thou practise? Remember that the true religious spirit is not to be found in *terra suaviter viventium*, in those who take this life easy.

III. Consider S. John's third privilege. After the preparation of an angelic life, and fortified with the actual example he was giving of the practice of such austere mortification, he applied himself to preach the coming of the Messiah to dispose the people to recognise and welcome Him as Saviour of the world. He acquitted himself of the office with such energy of purpose that even whilst detained a prisoner by Herod, he never ceased from making Jesus known, and sending him fresh followers. A holy occupation is this, that namely of preparing and inviting men to the knowledge and service of Christ; and if perchance thou art not able to do so by preaching from the pulpit, adopt the safer method of good example and holy

conversation which will produce greater fruit in thy neighbour, and will prove far more profitable to thyself.

MONDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT.

Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem, et semen tuum et semen illius.—Gen. iii. 15.

• *I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed.*

I. CONSIDER how, after Adam had, by his disobedience, lost original justice, and incurred the penalty of sin and eternal punishment for himself and his entire posterity, the infinite goodness of God would suffer no delay in giving a remedy for so great an evil. Hence, we may understand how greatly Almighty God has at heart and how ardently He desires the salvation of all: *omnes homines vult salvos fieri.*—Tim. ii. 4—*He will have all men to be saved.* Hence, likewise, thou mayest learn when thou hast fallen into any fault not to remain in that unhappy state, but immediately to apply the remedy and rise from thy fall at once, since the evil increases with the delay. With the same speed thou oughtest to rise from thy lesser faults also, correcting, for instance, that act of impatience, of pride, or of vanity by some act of the contrary virtue; and thus the benefit derived will be greater than the harm done.

II. Consider how that whilst God was preparing the remedy for Adam's sin, he wished at the same time to console him with the promise of a future Redeemer of his own race, who should make good, in a most advantageous manner, the loss inflicted on himself and his posterity by the deceitful serpent, freeing

them from the slavery of Satan, and raising them to a still higher degree of glory. What feelings of gratitude and tender love must not have risen in Adam's breast at hearing the promise ! Thine also ought to be the like sentiments, who art a sharer in the same great benefit. With thy own personal sins thou hast renewed in thyself the injuries caused by original sin ; but not for all that must thou be dismayed, and lose confidence in thy Redeemer. He is ready, as far as He is concerned, to raise thee up to thine own greater advantage. Knowest thou not how many sinners of the blackest dye have been raised up by the merciful hand of their Lord to a most sublime degree of virtue and to most eminent sanctity ? Fly therefore to the feet of Jesus with true confidence and true sorrow, and doubt not.

III. Consider how the promise of a future Redeemer, made in the beginning to Adam, was confirmed by Almighty God to his posterity still more clearly by means of figures and sacrifices ; so that all might reap the efficacy and fruit of Christ's merits through faith in a Redeemer to come, His infinite merits thus extended their efficacy to all men, and to all times past, present, and future. But thou art enabled to partake of these merits much more abundantly owing to a clearer knowledge of so great a mystery, and by means of the holy sacraments of the new law ! Be grateful, therefore. Oh what a much better use would those ancient Fathers have made of these same means than thou dost, if the same light and the same opportunities had been afforded to them as have been given to thee ! Be ashamed of thyself and detest thy ingratitude.

TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT.

Mitte, quem missurus es.—Exod. iv. 13.
Send whom thou wilt send.

I. CONSIDER how that after Almighty God had prepared a fitting remedy for Adam's sin, by the promise of a future Redeemer, He nevertheless put off His coming on earth for more than four thousand years, during which period the Messiah was longed for with incessant tears and heart-drawn sighs by the patriarchs and prophets and the entire chosen people of God. This was decreed for three reasons. Firstly, that thou mightest perceive that if thou wishest to obtain any favour thy Lord has determined to confer, thou must, agreeably to His own wish, earnestly and perseveringly beg for it in thy prayers. Here thou hast the reason why thou failest to obtain the graces thou needest, namely, because thou art cold and inconstant in begging God for them. If thou art not heard at the instant, thou growest weary, lovest patience, and ceasest to continue praying.

II. Consider the second reason of this delay, which was, that as before the coming of Christ the whole of mankind had been corrupted by vice and miserably buried in the thick darkness of ignorance, so also it might appear with greater evidence how necessary and beneficial the appearance of a Redeemer was, to enlighten man's intellect and strengthen his will. In the same way does thy Lord deal with thee : He tarries in freeing thee from that troublesome temptation or that harassing anxiety on purpose that thou mayest the better know thy own weakness, that thou mayest have an occasion for humbling thyself, and make greater

account of the benefit He confers on thee when He shall think fit to set thee free from it.

III. Consider the third cause of this delay, namely, because He wished to come at a period when His chosen people had all their thoughts and affections fixed on earthly goods, and looked for nothing else from the Messiah but their liberation from their bondage to the Romans, and when consequently on seeing Him appear on earth so poor and despised they would blame, persecute, and condemn Him to the death of the Cross ; whilst all the while it was precisely by the merits of this His death that he had to disenthral us from the slavery of the devil and of sin, and enable us to acquire possession of His eternal kingdom. Oh what a great lesson is this for thee ! Oftentimes thou feelest in thy heart a desire to do good in some particular charge or in some especial office for the benefit of thy brethren or of others, but because thou seest that thy companions do not second thee, or that thou art mortified by thy superiors, or persecuted by others, thou lovest courage, and on that account thou withdrawest thyself from performing the good thou wishest to do. No, just the contrary : then, precisely, is the most fitting time to practise long-suffering, humility, and charity ; and by plodding along perseveringly, seeking to please thy Lord alone, thou wilt enrich thyself with merit and virtue. In this manner wilt thou imitate more closely the example of Christ.

WEDNESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT.

Missus est angelus Gabriel ad Virginem desponsatam viro.—Luc. i. 26.

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin espoused to a man.

I. CONSIDER how the Blessed Virgin, having made a vow of virginity, consented to become the spouse of Joseph on receiving an assurance from Heaven that by so doing she would in nowise place her holy resolution in jeopardy, but would be enabled to conceal the virtue of virginity at a time when such a virtue was unknown, and also render it more precious and acceptable in the sight of God. All virtues are of great price and merit, but when there is one which is hidden from the eyes of men, and known only to God, oh how this enhances its humility and its merit! What is thy conduct in this regard? Dost thou strive that thy good wishes be known to God only, or dost thou seek to make display of them before others. Unless the grain of corn be buried and hidden in the earth, it will not produce fruit of any worth.

II. Consider that it was the Will of God that the Blessed Virgin should be betrothed to Joseph, in order also that the great mystery of the miraculous Incarnation, worked by the power of the Holy Ghost in Mary's womb, should remain a secret; since it was part of the plan of Divine Providence in the scheme of our redemption that this mysterious prodigy should for some time be hidden from the rest of the world. It would be extremely profitable to thee also if thou wert to hide not only thy good and virtuous actions, but also thy natural talents and genius until such time as thy Lord disposes otherwise by means of thy supe-

riors ; in this imitating Jesus, Who lived until His thirtieth year a hidden life, and passed as an ordinary man.

III. Consider that it was God's wish that this betrothal should take place in order to rescue the Son and the Mother from infamy, and in order that she should have a helpmate to maintain the life of the Son amidst the great poverty and the many persecutions they were to endure. Just see now what great fruit the Blessed Virgin reaped from a marriage which, it might have appeared to her, was calculated to prejudice her much-loved vow. The same results will be verified in thee, if only thou allowest thyself to be guided by Divine Providence. Thou wilt find comfort and relief where thou fearedst the greatest burdens. Learn, therefore, to confide in God, and to leave the care of thyself entirely in His hands : *In manibus tuis sortes mee*—Ps. xxx. 16—*My lots are in Thy hands.*

THURSDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT.

Missus est angelus Gabriel.—Luc. i. 26.
The angel Gabriel was sent.

I. CONSIDER how although Almighty God had determined so many ages before to redeem mankind by the Incarnation, He nevertheless did not wish that the Eternal Word should take flesh in Mary's womb without her consent, and for this reason He sent the archangel Gabriel to obtain her consent to become the Mother of God. This is the method Our Lord makes use of in working out the salvation of each one of us : He will not raise man to the dignity of son of God without his own consent. In effect He sends His messengers,

that is to say, His inspirations, in order that he may of his own free will co-operate in the attainment of so great a dignity. Remember, therefore, that thou wilt never obtain this high privilege without the concurrence of thy own will : *Qui creavit te sine te, non salvabit te sine te*—says S. Augustine—*He who created thee without thy co-operation will not save thee without it.* How hast thou corresponded hitherto with the inspirations of God ? Thy negligence in this respect is the primary cause why thou livest in so lamentable a state.

II. Consider how before the Blessed Virgin gave her consent, she examined the proposal of the angel to know how the title of mother could be reconciled with her vow of virginity : *Quomodo fiet istud ?—How shall this be done ?* thus showing her consummate prudence and extreme love for holy purity. Sometimes thou closest thy ear to the inspirations of God, at other times thou rushest headlong into rash resolutions without deliberation or advice. Learn from the Blessed Virgin to listen to the voice of God when He speaks to thy heart, but at the same time not to make any resolution without the advice of thy director, and so thou wilt not ensnare thyself.

III. Consider how the Blessed Virgin was chosen by Heaven not only to consent to accept of the dignity of mother, but was also chosen to accept, in the name of the whole human race, the Incarnate Word as head and Redeemer of the world ; and by this act she was appointed to be the guardian of mankind, and the channel through which all the benefits come to us which we derive from the Incarnation. This was decreed by God in order that just as the assumed humanity of Our Lord derives all its dignity from His divinity, through her instrumentality, so also through her instrumentality again, mankind should derive all the advantages which accrue to us from the deified humanity of Jesus. If such be the case, there-

fore, strive by thy marked homage to gain the favour of her who is the manager and dispenser of all the treasury of heaven. Above all, beg her to obtain for thee the grace to correspond faithfully with the inspirations of Almighty God, from whom thy every hope of good depends.

FRIDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT.

Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.
—Luc. i. 38.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it done unto me according to Thy word.

I. CONSIDER three acts of heroic humility practised by the Blessed Virgin in this interview with the archangel. Firstly, she did not grow proud at hearing herself praised as the most blessed among women, and proclaimed full of grace. Neither did she grow vain-glorious, but began rather to fear and blush—*turbata est in sermone ejus*—notwithstanding that these praises were uttered by a heavenly messenger, in whom she had reason not to suspect any sort of guile. Oh how far different is thy conduct from that of this most humble Virgin ! On hearing thy own praises thou instantly growest self-conceited, nay, thou even searchest after thy own praise in many ways that thou oughtest not, and at times art not ashamed even to praise thyself ! On the other hand, if thou hearest thyself justly corrected for thy faults, thou art disturbed and waxest wroth, so that thy pride is altogether at variance with the humility of the Blessed Virgin.

II. Consider the second act of humility practised by the Blessed Virgin, who, at the selfsame time that she was herself so extolled, humbles herself and lowers herself into the abyss of her own nothingness—pro-

claiming herself the handmaid of that God Who was actually making Himself her Son and the fruit of her womb : *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*. It was this humility that gained for her so exalted an honour : *Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ*. What are thy sentiments when Almighty God favours thee with any spiritual gift or grants thee spiritual sweetness in prayer ? If thou then acknowledgest thy own unworthiness all the more sincerely, and more earnestly encouragest thyself to be faithful in His service, it is well for thee : but if thou takest complacency at it, and beginnest to pride thyself in it, thou hast but too great reason to fear that thou wilt be despoiled of His gifts and wilt shamefully fall : *Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam*—1 Peter v. 5—*God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace*.

III. Consider that owing to the clear insight the Blessed Virgin had into the prophecies of holy Scripture, and the intimate knowledge she had of the whole plan of our redemption, she knew perfectly well all the sufferings and ill-treatment her Divine Son was to meet with in His lifetime and at His death, and therefore by offering herself to be His handmaid, she undoubtedly meant to offer herself to be the inseparable companion of all His labours and hardships. She thus submitted herself with like resignation and cheerfulness, on the one hand, to her exaltation to the dignity of Mother of God, and, on the other, to becoming the partner of the sufferings of her Divine Son. Thus it behoves thee also to act : in proportion as thy Lord favours thee thou oughtest to show thyself the more faithful and ready to follow Him to Calvary. Yet who knows whether perhaps thou art not one of that class of servants whom the condescension of their Master only serves to make more insolent and more wayward.

SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT.

☞ *Talis decebat, ut nobis esset pontifex, sanctus, innocens, impollutus.*—Heb. vii. 26.

For it was fitting that we should have such a high-priest, holy, innocent, undefiled.

I. CONSIDER that just as at the words of consecration in the Mass the body of Christ is instantly produced, so also at the words of the Blessed Virgin the body, together with the soul of Jesus, was formed in Mary's womb. His soul was endowed with every noble quality to render it the worthy dwelling-place of the Divinity. His body, on the other hand, was deprived of all those gifts of glory which were its due, and was framed as delicate and sensitive as possible, because it was made on purpose to suffer. What account hast thou made, up to the present time, of thy respective endowments of soul and body? Hast thou had a greater esteem for sanctity and virtue or for health and physical acquirements? Recognise thy mistake, and, seeing how Jesus took to Himself, for love of thee, a body more than ordinarily sensitive to pain, learn to accept, for love of Him, ailings and sicknesses of body with goodwill and to thy own spiritual advantage.

II. Consider that at the same instant in which the soul of Jesus was united to His body, our human nature was raised to the highest pitch of honour. Owing to this personal union, that privileged soul enjoyed the beatific vision from the first moment of its existence, and was enriched with all the treasures of the Divinity, and with the greatest possible fulness of grace, so that it was not capable of increasing in merit for itself as regards the glory of the soul, but could only merit in our behalf, and, as our Head, become the life-spring

whence we were to derive the fruits of His gifts and merits. Rejoice, therefore, at the immense profusion of grace poured out upon the human nature of Jesus, and thank God for so great a benefit conferred upon thee by His means. What would become of thee, poor wretch that thou art, hadst thou not Christ for thy Redeemer and thy Head? Yet what efforts dost thou make to remain united to Christ, as member of so great a Head? It is from the intimate union with the Word that the humanity of Christ derives all the treasures of the Divinity, and so thou also wilt be made partaker of His treasures in proportion as thou remainest united to Christ by love.

III. Consider the contentment and the joy of the Most Holy Trinity at this work, which is the greatest feat of Its Omnipotence. The Eternal Father congratulated Himself on having fulfilled His promise; the Word at having communicated His Divinity which He received from the Father, to man who was made to the likeness of the Father; the Holy Ghost, at having manifested in this boon the utmost bounds of His immense love. All the angels rejoiced on receiving the command to recognise and adore the deified humanity of Jesus as head of all the Church triumphant and militant: *et adorent eum omnes angeli ejus*—Heb. i. 6.—*Let all the angels of God adore Him.* Do thou also adore Him, and make Him a heartfelt protestation of thy desire to obey and serve Him only, as thy Saviour, thy Head, and thy Redeemer.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

Vox clamantis in deserto.—Joan. i. 23.

I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness.

I. CONSIDER how well S. John observed the counsel

of Ecclesiasticus iii. 20—*Quanto major es, humilia te in omnibus : The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things.* Although in the sight of both God and man he was so great as to be deemed by many the Messiah Himself, he nevertheless lowered himself in their estimation by resolutely refusing the honours they sought to confer on him of being the Messiah : *Confessus est, quia ego non sum Christus—He confessed : I am not the Christ.* Ambition after divine honours was the ruin of the angels, and afterwards of Adam. Lucifer hoped by this same means to work the downfall of S. John, but in vain. It is not to be supposed that thy pride so far inflates thee as to make thee aspire after divine honours, but how often dost thou not go in quest of other honours, and try to secure an amount of reputation far above thy merit ? When thou hearest any flatterer praise thee, thou approvest of it, and willingly acceptest his meed of praise, and complimentest thyself thereat, and God knows, perhaps thou art even one of these who pass themselves off for more than they really are ; oh, what unseemly language is this in the mouth of a religious !

II. Consider how S. John humbled himself, not only by refusing divine honours, but also by rejecting the honour he deserved, denying that he was either Elias or a prophet, notwithstanding that Christ Himself had declared him to be Elias in spirit, and canonised him with the appellation of "*plus quam prophetam*"—*more than a prophet.* As it is peculiarly the proud man's aim to obtain at all cost distinctions which are not his due, so also is it a sure sign of a humble man if he hides as far as he can everything that could possibly procure for him the esteem and respect of others. Reflect now a little on thyself, and see whether thou endeavourest to conceal thy talents, learning, and abilities, to escape honours ; or whether

thou proudly endeavourest to conceal thy defects and mistakes to escape confusion.

III. Consider how S. John, being constrained to render an account of himself, did not utter a single word about the nobility of his parentage or the dignity of his priesthood, but made known simply what was necessary, namely, his office of precursor of the Messiah, and that, too, with the greatest humility and modesty : *Ego vox clamantis in deserto, Dirigite viam Domini—I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness : Make straight the way of the Lord.*" He calls himself a voice, to show that he desired no other office than that of the tongue, which has no merit of its own, nor is of any worth in itself, but all the credit belongs to him who moves it and makes it speak. Learn from this conduct of S. John, when thou hast to undertake any duty of preaching or teaching, or other honourable employment which obliges thee to show thy learning and talents, never to appropriate the glory which may be the result of thy labours, but to refer it all to that Lord Who alone gave thee the necessary ability and strength : *Quid habes quod non accepisti ? Si autem accepisti quid gloriaris, quasi non acceperis.*—1 Cor. iv. 7. *What hast thou that thou hast not received ? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it ?*

MONDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT.

Ingrediens mundum, dicit, hostiam et oblationem. noluisti . . . Tunc dixi : ecce venio, ut faciam voluntatem tuam.—Heb. x. 5.

Coming into the world he saith : Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldest not . . . Then said I : Behold I come . . . That I should do Thy Will.

I. CONSIDER how Christ's humility was overwhelmed

by an ecstasy of deepest wonder on seeing His sacred humanity raised to its intimate union with the Divinity. The wondrous sight made Him burst forth into acts of the most intense love, reverence, and submission to the sovereign majesty of God, whilst, burning with the desire of corresponding with this profusion of divine bounty, He offered Himself entirely to the goodwill of His Father, and to all that He might choose to command Him : *Ecce venio ut faciam voluntatem tuam—Behold, I come to do Thy Will.* It was at this moment that God began to be worthily acknowledged, and honoured for the first time by a human creature—for this could only be done by a man-God. Thou wilt never thyself be able to elicit an act of homage proportionate to the greatness of Almighty God ; accustom thyself, however, to unite thy acts of worship with those of the sacred humanity of Jesus, and thus they will become most grateful to God, for Jesus intended from His Mother's womb to give honour to the Godhead in thy name also, as well as in that of the whole human race.

II. Consider that Christ never once interrupted, or even hesitated in, the oblation of Himself made to His Eternal Father from His Mother's womb, continuing it without faltering, in His every act and in every circumstance of His life. *Quæ placita sunt ei facio semper.*—Joan. viii. 29—*I do always the things that please Him.* Hence the whole life of Jesus was one continued renovation of that first offering which He made of Himself to His Eternal Father. Thou, also, it is to be supposed, madest an unreserved offering of thyself to God on thy first entrance into religion. See now how thou hast maintained it. How often hast thou not gone in quest of thy own convenience and advantage against the Will of God, instead of making this thy aim ? Be ashamed of thy remissness, and repeat over and over again, to thyself, as S. Bernard

did, *ad quid venisti*? For what purpose hast thou come to religion?

III. Consider how, in order to appease His own Divine justice, the Eternal Father imposed upon Jesus the redemption of mankind by a mutual interchange of our debts and His merits, and at the same time expressed His wish that this our Redemption should be effected by His undergoing the death of the Cross, although He declared Himself willing to accept of any other work that His well-beloved Son might offer as the price of our ransom, even though unaccompanied by suffering or humiliation, because all His actions, without exception, were of infinite value. Jesus, to meet the wishes of His heavenly Father, chose the death of the Cross, with all its agony and shame: *proposito sibi gaudio sustinuit crucem*—Hebr. xii. 2—*having joy set before Him, endured the Cross*. What sayest thou to this, thou who hast so often withdrawn thyself from under the yoke of God's Will, even in things expressly commanded thee, to avoid some little inconvenience or some slight misfortune? Art thou not covered with confusion at beholding the example of Christ?

TUESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT.

Exurgens Maria abiit in montana cum festinatione.—
Luc. i. 39.

And Mary, rising up, went into the hill-country with haste.

I. CONSIDER that Christ tarried not one instant in beginning the work of our redemption, for even before He was born, He went to sanctify S. John. He might have effected this by Himself, and remaining at Naza-

reth ; however, He chose to inspire His Mother to go and visit Elizabeth, and by her means bring about so great a benefit to S. John. He did this to let thee understand that as she was the means of John's sanctification, and was also the means of Jesus' first miracle at the marriage of Cana, so also is she still the channel through which all the favours we can hope for, either spiritual or temporal, will come to us from the liberality of God : *Sic est voluntas ejus, qui omnia nos habere voluit per Mariam*, says S. Bernard—*Such is His good pleasure, who has decreed that we should receive everything through Mary's hand.* If thou wert but to understand this great truth, how much more anxious wouldst thou not be to win the protection of so great a Lady by thy love and respect, recurring to her in all thy difficulties !

II. Consider the great promptitude with which the Blessed Virgin obeyed this inspiration : *abiit in montana cum festinatione*—*she went into the hill-country with haste*, without allowing her love of retirement and of the quiet of a contemplative life to delay her, nor the inconvenience and danger for herself and her divine offspring from so unseasonable a journey to deter her. How different is thy conduct, who either closest thy ears to the inspirations of grace, or puttest off their execution on account of a host of meaningless difficulties created by thy own self-love ? If thou knewest all the good thou lovest by frustrating these heavenly inspirations, thou wouldst not be so negligent in obeying the voice of God !

III. Consider that the Blessed Virgin undertook this tiresome journey, not indeed with the idea of paying merely a polite visit, nor from any curiosity to know for certain whether Elizabeth really was with child, as the angel had told her, nor much less through any vain wish to make known her own dignity of Mother of the Most High, but moved purely by

obedience to the Will of God, and by her desire to co-operate in the sanctification of the precursor. Thou also undertakest the inconvenience of this or that employment, or the fatigue of certain studies, imposed on thee by obedience; but from what motive? Is it merely to serve God, or rather to second thy own inclination of obtaining esteem and of showing off thy talent? Art thou as ready to forsake thy own convenience when it is a question of performing some work that is pleasing to God, but in which thy self-love finds nothing on which to feed? The movements of thy heart are hidden; examine, therefore, thy intentions minutely, for on these depends all the substance and nerve of thy virtuous actions.

WEDNESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT.

Ut audivit salutationem Mariæ Elisabeth, exultavit infans in utero ejus, et repleta est Spiritu Sancto.—Luc. i. 4.

When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb, and she was filled with the Holy Ghost.

I. CONSIDER how at the very first greeting of the Blessed Virgin to Elizabeth the infant Jesus instantly bestowed three graces on S. John. The first was that he was cleansed from the stain of original sin by the infusion of sanctifying grace. Secondly, he received the use of reason so as to be able to merit. Thirdly, he was enabled to understand clearly the great mystery of the Incarnation, and by reason of this insight he sensibly leaped from very joy in his mother's womb. S. John obtained all these blessings by means of the words uttered by the Blessed Virgin. Like blessings

does she obtain for all those also who recur to her, and take pleasure in remaining in her presence, obtaining for them the forgiveness of their sins, strength to perform virtuous works, and light to penetrate the mysteries of religion. If thou desirest to be enriched by the holy Infant Jesus, have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, and beg her to make thee hear His sweet voice in the interior of thy heart : *Sonet vox tua in auribus meis.*—Cant. ii. 14—*Let thy voice sound in my ears.*

II. Consider how this greeting illumined also the mind of Elizabeth, enabling her to discern the unspeakable dignity of Mary, and the mystery of a God made man, and how it caused her to burst forth into the most lofty praises of the Blessed Virgin, proclaiming her dignity with the sublime title of Mother of God. Neither did she forget to thank her for her condescension in undertaking so wearisome a journey, in order to come and see her : *Unde hoc mihi, ut veniat mater Domini mei ad me ?*—*Whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me ?* When thou receivest any favour from the Blessed Virgin, thou also oughtest to awaken in thy heart like sentiments of praise and thanksgiving, and to admire her motherly kindness in deigning from her lofty throne to turn her merciful eyes on so mean a wretch as thyself. But alas, thou art only too forgetful of a mother who confers so many favours on thee !

III. Consider how, on hearing her own praises, the Blessed Virgin made no reply, but, filled with the fire of divine love, directed her attention to extol Almighty God, and humble herself with her own touching canticle : *Magnificat anima mea Dominum . . . quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ.*—*My soul doth magnify the Lord . . . because He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaid.* How different are thy sentiments when thou art praised ; for instead of recognising God to be the giver of every good gift, and rendering thanks

to Him, thou growest vainglorious and haughty. Pray, therefore, the Blessed Virgin to obtain for thee a deep-felt humility and an ardent desire of directing all thy actions to the glory of God alone, and then thou also mayest say : *Magnificat anima mea Dominum.*

THURSDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT.

Joseph autem cum esset vir justus, et nollet eam traducere, voluit occulte dimittere eam.—Matth. i. 19.

But Joseph, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately.

I. CONSIDER how little one would have thought that Joseph, who was so holy and beloved by God as to be chosen to be the husband of the Mother of God and foster-father of the Incarnate Word, was ever to have been subjected to a most serious occasion of grief from so privileged an alliance, owing to the fact that the mystery of the Incarnation, which had been clearly revealed to John and Elizabeth, had not been made known to him. But this sort of treatment is very familiar to Divine Providence, which afflicts the most virtuous to enrich them with merit and give them an opportunity for the heroic exercise of virtue. And what a noble example did not Joseph give of prudence, patience, and charity ! With all those unmistakable signs of pregnancy, he cannot bring himself to condemn the Blessed Virgin ; he does not complain with her or any one else of the apparent injury done him. Thou, on the contrary, when thou imaginest that some injury has been done thee, art immediately disturbed, and lovest thy temper ; thou instantly accusest the

offender with a real or false charge, as the case may be ; thou forthwith breakest out into complaints and murmurs. Learn, rather, when it falls to thy lot to encounter wrongs or injuries, to imitate the patience of Joseph ; imitate his prudence in passing them over, his charity in keeping them to thyself.

II. Consider that although Our Lady knew very well the deep concern of Joseph and his design of putting her away, and although she could easily have calmed down this storm in the heart of her spouse by making the mystery known to him, she preferred for all that to be silent on a subject which entailed her own aggrandisement, and to leave the defence of her own innocence to Divine Providence. Oh how thou oughtest to be covered with confusion, thou, who art ever ready to spread abroad all that can possibly tend to thy own praise, and so quick to excuse thyself when any blame is cast upon thee ! Be content that thy innocence be known to God, and leave it to Him to ward off all calumnies from thee, and rest assured that He is well able to turn all to thy own greater advantage.

III. Consider Joseph's great consolation at seeing himself freed from his heavy trial by the loving Providence of God, when the mystery of the Incarnation was revealed to him by the ministry of an angel, and the incomparable holiness of the Blessed Virgin was manifested to him, for then he saw himself to be indeed the true spouse of the Mother of God, and foster-father on earth of the Son of God. How thankfully he must have exclaimed : *Secundum multitudinem dolorum meorum consolationes tuæ lætificaverunt animam meam*—Ps. xciii. 19—*According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul.* Such also will be the case with thee, if thou dost but put up with the trials of this life as thou oughtest ; for then thou wilt be rewarded with an

eternal recompense in the next world, and enjoy even in this the hundredfold of heavenly consolation.

FRIDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT.

Expectavimus eum, et salvabit nos.—Isa. xxv. 9.

We have waited for Him, and He will save us.

I. CONSIDER the burning desires of the fathers of the Old Testament to see the promised Messiah, sighed after for so many ages, at length make His appearance on earth: *Rorate cæli desuper, et nubes pluant justum*—Isa. xlv. 8—*Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just.* Almighty God willed that this event should be long sighed for, because in proportion as a desire is earnest, the object craved after is more constantly prayed for, and prayer is the most appropriate means for obtaining what Almighty God has determined to grant us. If thou dost not feel an ardent longing for Jesus to come and be born spiritually in thy heart, thou wilt not be a worthy subject to receive Him. Redouble, therefore, thy petitions in these days of Advent, in imitation of the ancient fathers, and so thou wilt appreciate His coming.

II. Consider how the most holy Virgin longed to bring forth her divine offspring as her time drew near. This flame of desire was kindled and fanned in the furnace of her heart by a twofold current: firstly, by an ardent desire to offer her homage and services to the Son of the Eternal Father, Who had deigned to choose her for His mother; and secondly, by a yearning to give a Saviour to the world, and relieve mankind from so much misery. Thou also oughtest to desire Jesus to come to thee spiritually, not only for thy own sake, but also to be the better able to offer

Him thy homage, and promote the welfare of thy neighbour.

III. Consider the still more ardent longings of Jesus. He had been nine months pent up in Mary's womb, offering to His Eternal Father the carking anguish He endured in that dark prison for our ransom. But when He saw the hour arrive for His birth, He rejoiced, not from any desire of releasing Himself from His trammels, but from His longing to begin His earthly career from the cave of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary for the redemption of men: *Exultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam*—Ps. xviii. 6—*He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way.* How far different are thy desires, and what a contrast to thy likings! That occupation which obedience imposes on thee grows tedious to thee, and thou gettest disgusted at remaining in a state of childlike subjection, from a hankering after greater liberty and greater comfort. If thou hadst a true love for Jesus, thou wouldst not so soon grow weary of suffering a little for love of Him: for true love does not grow weary, nor repent of what it has undertaken; on the contrary, love is never so real as when it endures labour and suffering for the object loved. Love Jesus in real earnest, and every labour and fatigue will become light and pleasant to thee.

SATURDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT.

Exiit edictum a Cæsare Augusto, ut describeretur orbis.
—Luc. ii. 1.

There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled.

I. CONSIDER that the Eternal Father had from all eternity pre-ordained not only the time of the birth of

Christ, but also the place, the manner, and the circumstances : all which had been already foretold by the Prophets. Therefore it was permitted that Cæsar Augustus should, in his pride and avarice, just then publish an edict that a census should be made of the whole empire, and that all should pay him tribute. See here the dispositions of Providence, to the end that the Incarnate Word should find His birthplace away from Nazareth in a cave used as a stable for beasts of burden. How often does it not happen that that which is a most just disposition of Almighty God appears to thee to be a mere human whim, outstepping the limits of authority, and on that account thou gettest disturbed, lovest thy patience, and waxest wroth at the inconvenience thou hast to put up with therefrom. Thrice happy art thou if only thou wouldst open thy eyes to the loving dispositions of Providence, which avails itself even of the ill-will of others to derive thence thy own good.

II. Consider that the Blessed Virgin submitted herself to this edict without any demur : she did not withdraw herself from obedience with the excuse that her labour was fast approaching, nor from the burden of paying the tribute under the pretext that she was poor ; but she recognised in the unjust command of Augustus the most holy Will of Almighty God, according to the teaching of the Apostle : *Obedite dominis carnalibus . . . in simplicitate cordis vestri, non ad oculum servientes, quasi hominibus placentes, sed ut servi Christi, facientes voluntatem Dei ex animo*—Eph. vi. 5 —*Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh . . . in the simplicity of your heart, not serving to the eye, as it were, pleasing man, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.* And thou who hast made a solemn vow of obedience to thy superiors, who are expressly given thee to be the interpreters of the Will of God in thy regard, art thou ready to put

into execution whatever is commanded thee, although burdensome and inconvenient? or dost thou draw back, make thy excuses, and refuse? How great reason thou hast to blush at this example of obedience given thee by the Mother of God to an edict of Cæsar!

III. Consider how the Blessed Virgin, together with S. Joseph, set out on their long and wearisome journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, in the midst of winter, and in the greatest poverty. She, however, little thought of these inconveniences, because in them she saw the Will of Heaven, and because she bore with her her Divine Son, shortly to give Him to the light of day in a poor stable, conformably to the dispositions of Divine Providence. If thou wouldst only keep in Jesus's company, and bear Him by love in thy heart, every trial will become light to thee, from the hope of one day enjoying His visible presence.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Factum est verbum Domini super Joannem Zachariæ filium in deserto.—Luc. iii. 2.

The word of the Lord was made unto John the son of Zachary in the desert.

I. CONSIDER that S. John, in his character of forerunner of Christ, makes easy, and points out to thee, the way in which thou mayest prepare thyself well for the birth of thy Saviour: *Parate viam Domini—Prepare ye the way of the Lord.* This preparation consists in three things only: in penance, in humility, and in purity of intention. First of all, then, it consists in penance: *Prædicans baptismum penitentiae—Preaching the baptism of penance*; for thou canst not

hope that Jesus will be born spiritually in thy heart unless thou removest all obstacles in the shape of vice and sin. This penance must be not merely interior, consisting in a sincere sorrow for sins committed, and for thy former ingratitude to the goodness of God, but it must be exterior also, consisting in the mortification of thy senses, and especially of those which thou hast hitherto made the instruments of sin. By means of this practice of penance thou wilt prepare thy heart for the birth of Christ.

II. Consider that to the practice of penance thou must add humility: *Omnis mons et collis humiliabitur—Every mountain and hill shall be brought low.* Thou wilt never be able to cleanse thy heart so thoroughly by means of penance as to make it a worthy receptacle for the Divine Infant. Humility alone is capable of supplying so great a deficiency. Acknowledge therefore thy demerit, and own thy unworthiness, begging Him, that as for love of thee He deigned to be born in a manger, which He changed by His Divine presence into a dwelling fit for Paradise, so also He would deign now to be born in thy heart, which, until now, has been the resort of brutal vices and unbridled passions, and make it a worthy dwelling for Himself, by changing it into an abode of angelic purity.

III. Consider the third thing thou hast to strive after, which is purity of intention: *Dirigite vias rectas—Make straight his paths*; that is to say, thou must make all thy preparations simply and solely to please and honour the Divine Infant. It is to be supposed that thou art not of the number of those whose preparations for Christmas consists in looking forward to it simply as a period of recreation and merry-making; but who knows whether, by virtue of thy preparation, thou intendest to give thyself without reserve to the infant Jesus, and to consecrate thyself entirely to His service? Jesus wills to be born in the

stable of Bethlehem, in order to devote His labours and fatigues, His blood and life, for thy good alone, without any advantage of His; do thou therefore prepare thyself to welcome Him, with a firm determination to devote thyself and all thy toil and laborious pains, without any other object in view than to serve and love Him alone.

CHRISTMAS-EVE.

Non erat ei locus in diversorio.—Luc. ii. 7.
There was no room for them in the inn.

I. CONSIDER how the Blessed Virgin, having arrived with her husband, S. Joseph, at the city of Bethlehem, whither an immense concourse of people had gathered together in consequence of Cæsar's edict, went begging, weary as she was after her journey, from door to door for some poor lodging, where she might retire and bring forth her Divine offspring. Behold the preparations made for the birth of the Messiah promised by Heaven so many ages before, so long sighed after by His own people!—to be left unprovided with even a couch whereon to repose His limbs, or a roof under which to shelter Himself in His very birth: *Vulpes foveam habent, et volueres cœli nidos; Filius autem hominis non habet ubi caput suum reclinat*—Luc. ix. 58—*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.* Thou makest profession of evangelical poverty in order to conform thyself to the poverty of Christ, and art thou not ashamed of being so great a friend to thy own comfort, and of procuring for thyself even superfluities in thy cell, thy clothing and food in some instances utterly unbecom-

ing thy state of life as a religious? And when it happens that thou art not provided just to thy own liking, there is no end to thy complaints. Oh, what great reason thou hast to feel ashamed of thyself on this score!

II. Consider how that after the Blessed Virgin and S. Joseph had been wandering from house to house for a long time, begging for charity's sake the use of any sort of outhouse or hut wherein to bring forth and lodge the King of glory and the Monarch of the universe, they saw themselves debarred from and denied every possible sort of convenience. What thinkest thou were the feelings that such a persistent refusal must have awakened in Mary's heart? She was not annoyed, nor did she complain, as is thy wont when thou receivest a refusal; but she only grieved to think that her own people were so blinded as to reject the Son of God, so long expected and wished for: *In propria venit et sui eum non receperunt*—Joan. i. 11—*He came unto His own and His own received Him not.* At any rate, the people of Bethlehem deserve some excuse, inasmuch as they did not know either who it was that demanded a lodging, or for whom it was requested; but thou, who knowest Who it is that comes, by His inspirations, to seek a dwelling in thy heart, in order to sanctify it, what excuse canst thou hope to find for the many undeserved rebuffs He has met with at thy hands?

III. Consider that the Blessed Virgin, seeing herself refused admittance by all, was constrained to retire, together with Joseph, into a miserable cowshed. She resigned herself totally to the dispositions of Divine Providence, seeing that it was the Will of the Eternal Father that the Incarnate Word should be born in a noisome stable, deprived of every convenience, and exposed to the inclemency of the winter, so that He might teach us all by His example to despise all the

comforts and finery of the world, and at the same time not to shirk being despised by the world. How dost thou correspond to such an excess of love? and what endeavours dost thou make to copy this example of despising and being despised by the world?

CHRISTMAS DAY, DECEMBER 25TH.

Impleti sunt dies, ut pareret. Et peperit Filium suum primogenitum, et pannis eum involvit, et reclinavit eum in præsepio.—Luc. ii. 6, 7.

Her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger.

I. CONSIDER, that as the Blessed Virgin knew the time of her confinement was at hand, she retired apart, and, whilst in an ecstasy of lofty contemplation, was delivered, without pain or detriment, of her Divine Infant, Jesus. She was at the same time enriched with immense treasures of grace, and overwhelmed by an unspeakable joy. Thus might she, like the Eternal Father, exclaim: *In splendoribus sanctorum.....genui te*—Ps. cix. 3—*In the brightness of the saints.....I begot Thee.* Congratulate the Blessed Virgin on having so happily presented to the world the fruit of her womb; and take care that thou availlest thyself, to thy own advantage, of a day so replete with joy in heaven, and with blessings on earth, because it is a day of grace.

II. Consider how the Blessed Virgin, realising as she did the Divine Infant to be her own son, and at the same time the Son of the Eternal Father, tenderly embraced Him as His Mother, whilst she also paid Him her tribute of most profound adoration. Here

reflect a while, how intense must have been her acts of homage, by which she adored Him as her God and Creator ; how lively her feelings of gratitude for His having chosen her to be His mother ; how earnest her thanksgiving, both in her own behalf and in the name also of all mankind, for having abased Himself to such an extent for the redemption of mankind. Observe, likewise, what are the emotions and offerings of Joseph, who, together with the Blessed Virgin, shows himself most willing and ready to offer his services and labour, to maintain and attend Him in this His extreme destitution. Unite also thy affection and offering to these acts of Mary and Joseph, but do so with all earnestness.

III. Consider how, after Joseph had arranged a little straw in the manger, Mary wrapped some poor and scanty raiment round the Infant, and placed Him in His rough cradle between two beasts of burden. At the sight of a God, Whose throne in heaven is supported by the Seraphim, reduced for love of thee to recline in such poverty between two animals, wilt thou not make up thy mind once for all to put up with those little inconveniences of poverty and hardship which thy religious state entails, and that, too, with a good will, for love of Him ? Oh, how thou oughtest to long for the good fortune of being able to practically realise a most rigid poverty in everything, in imitation of the example given thee by Jesus, Who from the very first outset, at His birth, until His last breath on the Cross, could pride Himself that : *Pauper sum ego et in laboribus a juventute mea*—Ps. lxxxvii. 16—*I am poor and in labours from my youth.*

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

In capite libri scriptum est de me, ut facerem voluntatem tuam.—Ps. xxxix. 8.

In the head of the book it is written of Me, that I should do Thy will.

I. CONSIDER three acts which the holy Infant elicited as soon as He was born. The first was to raise His heart and mind to heaven, and thank His beloved Father at seeing Himself reduced, conformably to His good pleasure, to such a state of forlorn estrangement and utter poverty: *Ita, Pater; quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te*—Matth. xi. 26—*Yea, Father; for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight.* Thou hast no difficulty in submitting thyself to the Will of God, and even in giving Him thanks when He caresses and fondles thee. But what great difficulty thou experiencest in submitting thyself to the Will of God when thou labourest under trials, and art left to thy own resources! Learn from the holy Infant to be resigned in time of tribulation, for this is the surest proof thou canst give of the love thou bearest thy heavenly Father.

II. Consider Jesus's second act, which was to make an offering of the sharp pains He suffered in His tender limbs from the inclemency of the season, from the rawness of the night, from the incommodity of the place, and the deficiency of every sort of comfort, to make an offering of all this to the justice of God in satisfaction for thy sins, and in atonement for the penalty due to them. Dost thou not thank Him from thy heart for such great goodness? But if thou wouldst derive the greatest advantage from these sufferings of the Infant Jesus, thou must accustom thyself to offer, in union with them, thy own little tribute of daily suffering, which thou must needs undergo,

whether from the inclemency of the seasons, or bodily ailment, or mental affliction, or again, from the trials inherent to thy religious state. By thus offering them to the divine justice they will become far more pleasing to the Eternal Father, and far more meritorious for thyself.

III. Consider the third act elicited by the holy Infant. Not content with what He was actually suffering, He offered Himself with cheerful readiness to undergo the death of the cross, and to run with giant's strides from Bethlehem to Calvary, to make Himself the expiatory victim of thy sins: *Exultavit ut gigas ad currendum viam*—Ps. xviii. 6—*He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way.* As for thee, thou lovest courage at every little exertion thou hast to make, or slight inconvenience that thou hast to put up with in this particular place, or in that especial charge; thy burden becomes insupportable, and thou seekest to be relieved from it. Oh how great is thy coldness of heart and ingratitude! If thou only didst but think in earnest of what Jesus has suffered for thee, thou couldst not feel either toil or weariness, but only a hunger and thirst to suffer still more, and make some return for the love of Jesus, who was never wearied of suffering for thy welfare; so much so, that even whilst hanging on the cross, amidst a sea of anguish, he cried out, "*Sitio,*" *I thirst.*

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

Erunt oculi tui videntes præceptorem tuum.—Is. xxx.
20.

Thy eyes shall see thy Teacher.

I. CONSIDER, that there was no need for Jesus to be born in such great poverty, or to subject Himself to

so many humiliations and sufferings in order to work out thy salvation ; but He chose to embrace all these hardships to be thy Master, and teach thee, by His example, the way of perfection. Imagine, therefore, the stable to be the class-room, and the manger the chair of this great Master ; and that the voice of the Eternal Father resounds in thy ears from within the cave, as it did on Mount Thabor : *Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi bene complacui : ipsum audite*—Matth. xvii. 5—*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased : hear ye Him.* Endeavour to frequent this school with diligence, and listen attentively to the lessons of so great a Master, who alone can make thee truly learned in what alone is of importance.

II. Consider under what an obligation thou art to Almighty God for having caused thee to be born when and where thou hast so many opportunities of profiting by the doctrines of a Master so earnestly longed for by the ancient patriarchs, and even at the present day so little known by numberless individuals who are not in the bosom of Holy Church. But much more still are thy thanks due, because He has called thee to the religious state, the real school of Christ, where thou mayest learn the science of the saints and evangelical perfection ! How many are there who now live in the darkness of ignorance, but who would have derived much greater fruit than thou hast, if God had given them the same helps as He has given thee, by enabling thee to frequent this school, and hear the lessons of their Divine Master. Art thou not ashamed of thy negligence ? What will it profit thee to have mounted the pulpit, or the professor's chair, if thou art not well grounded in that learning which alone will avail thee in eternity ?

III. Consider which are the most important lessons that Jesus gives thee from His cradle. They are all contained in two virtues, humility and meekness :

Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde—Matth. xi. 29—*Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.* These are the most necessary of all virtues: meekness in adversity, humility in prosperity; meekness in putting up with the inconveniences or vexations which come to thee from God or from thy neighbour, but which, however, will never equal those which Jesus had to endure; and humility in weaning thyself from every inclination to ambition or pride, and by leading a life of total subjection to the will of others. These are the two virtues to which thou must apply thyself most especially in the school of Bethlehem.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

Et iterum cum introducit primogenitum in orbem terræ, dicit, Et adorent eum omnes angeli Dei.—Hebr. i. 6.

And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God adore Him.

I. CONSIDER, that as soon as the holy Infant was born, the Eternal Father commanded all the angelic choirs to adore Him, and acknowledge Him as their King, so that He might receive greater honour and glory from the homage of the angels in proportion as He had lowered Himself for the salvation of man. These blessed spirits all obeyed the command with promptness, and joyfully hastened to offer their homage to their Head and King, although they beheld Him in a state of such debasement, and that, too, not for their good, but for ours. Learn from these angelic spirits how much more ardently thou oughtest to adore Him, inasmuch as thou beholdest Him reduced to lie in a manger, in order to open the kingdom of

heaven for thee. At least, offer Him the homage of those angelic choirs, as though it were thy own.

II. Consider how the angels immediately went, in human form, to spread abroad the news of Jesus's birth, and thus promote the glory of their common Lord, and at the same time co-operate in the salvation of mankind, purchased by Jesus at the cost of so great suffering. Doubtless thou art not slow to offer thy tribute of adoration and ardent love to the Divine Infant, in the quiet of thy cell, and in time of prayer. But this is not enough ; it behoves thee, in imitation of the angels, to endeavour to promote His glory by engrafting in the hearts of others a real devotion to the infant Jesus by means of holy conversation, and in any other way thy state of life permits : for he who really loves Jesus cannot but desire Him to be known and loved by all.

III. Consider that the angels were the bearers of these great tidings of joy, not to the learned of this world, on account of their pride ; not to the rich, on account of their avarice ; nor to the high-born, on account of their attachment to pleasure and their own comfort ; but the announcement was made to poor shepherds only, engaged in keeping their watches in the dead of the night. These were the men who were favoured by the angels, and were especially dear to Heaven. How different are the judgments of God from those of the world ! Congratulate thyself, therefore, on thy happy state as a poor religious, which ought to make thee compassionate, and not envy the condition of the prosperous ones of this world. But if thou wouldst be amongst the specially privileged and loved ones of Almighty God, thou must also be attentive like these good shepherds, to keep guard over thy animal passions ; for it will avail thee little if thou art only poor in earthly possessions, but art a slave to thy passions and evil inclinations.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY OF DECEMBER.

Evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum, quia natus est vobis hodie Salvator mundi.—Luc. ii. 11.

I bring you good tidings of great joy, for this day is born to you a Saviour.

I. CONSIDER the manner in which the news of the birth of Christ was intimated to the shepherds by the angels. First of all, they were enveloped in dazzling light and overwhelmed by great fear : *Claritas Dei circumfulsit illos, et timuerunt timore magno.* Such is the ordinary way in which Almighty God prepares souls to receive singular favours : He lights up their intellect with the clear flame of His grace, and at the same time enkindles in their hearts a salutary fear and reverence. The shepherds were then informed of the joyful tidings that the Saviour of the world was born. Great matter it is, surely, for joy when Jesus is spiritually born in any loving heart ! But what will all the gladness of this festival avail thee, if the holy Infant is not born in thy own heart by love and grace ?

II. Consider what were the signs given to the shepherds by which they might find the holy Infant : *Invenietis infantem, pannis involutum, positum in præsepio*—*You shall find the Infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.* Here is an infallible way, and a certain criterion by which to find Jesus : humility, poverty, and mortification. If thou goest in quest of Him by any other road—such as ambition, love of thy own ease, attachment to the goods of this world—never hope to find Jesus : whereas, if thou givest thyself to the practice of these virtues, they will be so many certain signs that the holy Infant is in thy heart.

III. Consider what the angels sang in the hearing

of the shepherds : *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis—Glory to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good-will* ; by which words they gave them to understand what was the object our Lord had in view in His birth—namely, the glory of God and the welfare of man. This is also the aim thou oughtest to have in all thy actions : thou oughtest to direct all thou dost and all thou knowest to the glory of God : *Soli Deo honor et gloria—1 Tim. i. 17—To the only God be honour and glory*, and not appropriate to thyself one particle of what belongs to God alone. Thou oughtest, moreover, to strive to be at peace with God, by craving His pardon for thy sins ; at peace with thyself, by keeping thy flesh under the control of thy spirit ; at peace with thy neighbour, by showing to all the warmth of brotherly love. Take notice that this peace is not so much for men of good intellect and gifted with human endowments, as for men of good-will, whose desire it is to prefix to themselves the same end that Jesus proposed to Himself, and to imitate the virtues taught us in His birth.

THIRTIETH DAY OF DECEMBER.

Pastores loquebantur ad invicem : Transeamus usque Bethlehem.—Luc. ii. 15.

The shepherds said one to another : Let us go over to Bethlehem.

I. CONSIDER that when the shepherds heard such joyful intelligence they encouraged one another to betake themselves to Bethlehem, and see the Saviour that had been born, without even waiting for the break of day, or fearing to leave their flocks unprotected in the darkness of the night. This is a beautiful example, which

teaches thee how to correspond with the inspirations and calls of Heaven that bid thee seek and find thy Saviour. As soon as thou receivest any light or feelest some inspiration in thy heart, thou instantly pausest to reflect on the inconvenience that the performance of that virtuous act will cause thee, or on the injury that may probably result to the flock of thy passions, or on the slur thou mayest cast on thy good name, or on the loss of some imaginary advantage : and so the call of grace is lost in empty air. Learn from the shepherds to accept the invitation of grace instantly, without paying attention either to inconvenience or human respect as thou hast hitherto done.

II. Consider how on entering that cave, and seeing the holy Babe between two animals, with Mary and Joseph by His side, the shepherds were interiorly illumined by a most vivid knowledge that that poor and abandoned Child was the true Messias and Saviour of the world, so often promised by Heaven, and so long sighed after by the chosen people of God. Acting up to this knowledge, they adore Him, and thank Him with the tenderest affections of reverence and love for having lowered Himself to such a state of humiliation for the salvation of all. Do thou also enter the cave, not indeed with the body, but with the affections of thy heart, and adore Him together with the holy shepherds, and thou wilt, like them, be enlightened from on high : *Accedite ad eum et illuminamini*—Ps. xxxiii. 6—*Come ye to Him, and be enlightened.*

III. Consider how, on their departure from the cave, the shepherds, full of a spiritual gladness, immediately set about making known the birth of the Saviour in that neighbourhood, and so became the first heralds of the appearance of the Son of God on earth. See here the verification of those words of Our Lord : *Abscondisti hæc a sapientibus et prudentibus, et revelasti ea parvulis*—Luc. x. 21—*Thou hast hidden these things*

from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. The infant Jesus in His crib is recognised as the Messiah by these poor shepherds, whilst the potentates of the earth and the doctors of the synagogue failed to come to a knowledge of this truth in the midst of the convincing evidence afforded them in the wonderful miracles He continually wrought. Our Lord will only give Himself to the humble, and to those who are little in their own eyes, but not to the proud, nor to those who are full of themselves. To which class dost thou belong?

THIRTY-FIRST DAY OF DECEMBER.

Fidem posside cum amico in paupertate illius, ut et in bonis illius læteris.—Eccl. xxii. 28.

Be faithful to a friend in his poverty, that in his prosperity also thou mayst rejoice.

I. CONSIDER that one of the principal motives why the King of Glory ever came down from the lofty throne of His majesty to be born in the greatest poverty in a stable, was to try the fidelity of those who love Him. Alas! how many there are who on beholding Him lying in a manger, naked, and benumbed with cold, despise Him and turn their backs upon Him! Hast thou made up thy mind to be His faithful friend in this forlorn state? to adhere to Him and be His follower? If so, happy indeed art thou! Thou mayst hold for certain that He will bountifully reward thee when He resumes His seat on that throne whence He has come. An earthly king, who has had a reverse of fortune, rewards none so richly when fortune again smiles on him as those who did not forsake him in his troubles. In the same manner will thy

Saviour act towards thee, if thou art faithful to Him now.

II. Consider what is implied by being faithful to Jesus in His state of complete abandonment and utter destitution. It means that thou also must be content to put up with a like lot, and must suffer in union with Him the trials He sends thee to try thy fidelity. Yet what canst thou expect if in thy state of holy poverty thou art unfaithful to thy engagements? Most certainly thou canst never aspire to the riches of His kingdom unless thou sharest His poverty and His sufferings: *Si tamen compatimur ut et conglorificemur*—Rom. viii. 17—*Yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.*

III. Consider what are these riches to which Jesus will give thee a right if thou art faithful to Him in the state of poverty which He openly professes in the cave. They are twofold riches: riches for the time being, and riches for a future eternity. He will bestow upon thee now, in proportion to the fidelity thou showest Him, the riches of grace which are the real treasures He confers on His friends: He will bequeath to thee for a future eternity the possession of Paradise, with all its gifts of glory, to make thee everlastingly happy: *Ut in bonis illius læteris*. An earthly king who returns, after a temporary exile, to take possession of his kingdom, cannot at most give more than a small portion of his territory to the faithful sharers of his misfortunes; but Jesus will, if thou art faithful to Him now, give thee His entire kingdom to enjoy with Him, without fear of ever losing it. Is not all this enough to make thee resolve on being evermore His faithful friend?

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Vocatum est nomen ejus Jesus, quod vocatum est ab Angelo, priusquam in utero conciperetur.—Luc. ii. 21.

His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

I. CONSIDER that on this day the holy Infant took on Himself the mark of sinner as son of Abraham, and the Name of Jesus or Saviour as Son of God : for unless He had assumed the appearance of a culprit, transferring our sins to His own shoulders, and cancelling our debts with His own Blood, He could never have wrought our salvation. If thou wouldst enjoy the benefits which this most holy Name implies, and win for thyself a divine sonship, endeavour to humble thyself and treat thyself as a guilty wretch ; and thus, by virtue of this wondrous Name, thou mayest hope to become a child of God.

II. Consider that, in order to become thy Saviour, Jesus has made Himself thy Physician and Master, thy Surety and Advocate, thy Captain and Shepherd, so that He may be able to free thee from all liabilities of guilt and penalty, and enrich thee with all the goods of grace and glory. Wilt thou not then thank Him from thy inmost heart for having, at the cost of so much anguish and so much blood, taken a name which has brought with it such a complete remedy for all thy woes ? Why dost thou not have recourse to Him, and call upon His holy Name in all thy needs, whether these arise from temptations, trials, or dangers, and make use of so powerful a Name as a shield wherewith to defend thyself from the assaults of thy foes, as a solace to comfort thee in thy trials, as a beacon to guide thee in danger ? *Non enim aliud nomen est sub cœlo datum hominibus in quo oporteat nos salvos fieri—*

Act. iv. 12—*For there is no other Name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved.*

III. Consider that it was from the lips of the Blessed Virgin that the sound of this most holy and life-giving Name fell for the first time on the ears of men—that Name which had been decreed by God the Father from all eternity. No sooner did she pronounce it than her heart overflowed with joy and consolation, and all the angelic hosts bowed themselves down in adoration, and exulted in triumph and gladness, in the knowledge that so great a Name was to be adored both on earth and in hell as well. *In nomine Jesu omne genu flectatur, cœlestium, terrestrium, et infernorum*—Philip. ii. 10—*In the Name of Jesus let every knee bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.* Adore this great Name thyself also with all humility: love it with the tenderness of an unbounded affection, and endeavour not only to have it frequently on thy lips, but to keep it indelibly engraven on thy heart, so that thy actions and thy whole life may all be directed to the glory of Jesus thy Saviour: *In Domino gaudebo et exultabo in Deo Jesu meo*—Habac. iii. 8—*I will rejoice in the Lord, and I will joy in God my Jesus.*

SECOND DAY OF JANUARY.

Postquam consummati sunt dies octo, ut circumcideretur puer.—Luc. ii. 21.

After eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised.

I. CONSIDER that as the Blessed Virgin and S. Joseph knew it was God's Will that the holy Infant should be circumcised, according as the law prescribed for all the descendants of Abraham, they conformed to the pre-

cept, although they well knew that the Divine Child had no need of the rite, owing to His freedom from original sin. Observe here the virtue of the Mother. She was as fond of her divine Babe as a mother could be, and she was well aware of the grievous pain that the wound would cause Him : but she will not on any consideration allow her mother's tenderness to gain the upper hand, and she courageously obeys the Will of God. What a beautiful example is this for thee ! When it is a question of obeying God, all tenderness of affection for friends, relations, or country must be conquered, and every natural feeling generously sacrificed for the service of Almighty God.

II. Consider the pain the Divine Child underwent. He was endowed with perfect use of reason, a most delicate frame, and an extremely keen sensitiveness, so that He dreaded the cruel wound which other children did not, and felt its pangs more than they. And yet He had no need of this remedy, nor was He bound by this law : but He subjected Himself to circumcision, and assumed the appearance of guilt, in order to give thee a remedy for all thy evils. Thou hast no difficulty in submitting to those observances and regulations which entail no inconvenience and are not contrary to thy natural inclination : but thou findest great difficulty in submitting to those which are burdensome to thee and wound thy pride. It is, however, by the faithful observance of such duties as these that thou hast to show thy love for Jesus and merit His grace.

III. Consider that amongst the Hebrews, whoever underwent circumcision was by that very fact subjected to the grievous yoke of the Mosaic law. Thus, whilst Jesus, in conformity with the ordinance of His Heavenly Father, took in His circumcision the brand of a sinner on account of our sins and for our salvation, He also subjected Himself by that very act to a

most grievous burden of heavy penalties, undeserved infamy, and of the most agonising, and at the same time shameful, death of the Cross. Make an entire offering of thyself to the holy Will of God, together with the merit of this wonderful obedience of Jesus, resigning thyself to His Fatherly dispositions in thy regard for the whole course of thy life, and in all and each of the events ordained by Providence.

THIRD DAY OF JANUARY.

Consummati sunt dies octo, ut circumcideretur puer.—
Luc. ii. 21.

Eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised.

I. CONSIDER that it was not without mystery that the Name of Jesus was given to the holy Infant in the very act of shedding His precious Blood for our sake ; for from this thou mayst gather that a mere name is of no use unless it be accompanied by the verification of what it imports. Thou bearest the name of Christian, and what is more, of religious : but of what good, pray, will this name be to thee, if by thy conduct thou dost not verify so noble a title ? To become a religious, not in name, but in deed, thou must circumcise thyself and strip thyself of the old man, by laying aside all those maxims of the world which are opposed to the maxims of Christ and to thy profession as religious. *Expoliantes vos veterem hominem cum actibus suis*—Coloss. iii. 9—*Stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds.* Enter into thyself and see what are the maxims which rule thy conduct, whether they be of Christ or of the world.

II. Consider that in order to bear the name of a

religious as it deserves, it is not enough that thou strip thyself of the maxims and manners of the world, but it is, moreover, requisite that thou put on the livery of Jesus, putting into practice His most salutary example. This, then, is the reason why the Saviour submits Himself to the knife of circumcision—to teach thee to put away all superfluities, to mortify thy senses and thy flesh, to subject, in fine, the appetites of thy stubborn nature by a life of humility and subjection : *Semper mortificationem Jesu in corpore nostro circumferentes, ut et vita Jesu manifestetur in corporibus nostris*—2 Cor. iii. 10—*Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.* If all this should seem to thee too grievous, reflect how much more did the example which Christ has given thee cost Him.

III. Consider that Jesus, as yet but a tender babe, was not content with undergoing the many privations He had to endure at His birth, but he wished even to shed His Blood for thy sake, and to His own great pain : for love is never more evident than in the midst of suffering. If thou professest to love Jesus, show thy love by suffering willingly for His sake whenever the opportunity presents itself throughout the day, desiring even to shed thy blood if He should make thee worthy of so great a favour. Three times did Christ shed His Blood for thee : at His circumcision, by the hands of His parents ; in the garden, of His own accord ; in the prætorium and on Calvary, at the hands of His enemies. So thou also oughtest to correspond by enduring with a good will all that is burdensome, whether it comes to thee from thy superiors or from thyself, or from those that persecute thee.

FOURTH DAY OF JANUARY.

Cum natus esset Jesus in Bethlehem, ecce magi ab oriente venerunt Jerosolymam.—Matth. ii. 1.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem.

I. CONSIDER that as Christ came on earth for the salvation of all, so also it was His wish that His birth should be made known to all, not only to the Jews but to the Gentiles as well : to the former, by means of angels, as the ministers of that chosen people ; to the latter by means of a star, already foretold to them by the Prophet Balaam. Hence we see how true it is that Almighty God gives to all and each one such means and helps to attain salvation as are proportionate to their state. *Omnes homines vult salvos fieri, et ad agnitionem veritatis venire*—1 Tim. ii. 4—*Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* But how far more abundant are not the aids He has bestowed on thee in comparison with those He has given to so many who would have corresponded with them far better than thou hast ! And yet, although through His grace thou hast been brought up a Christian, and livest in the religious state, thou forgettest even to thank Him in return.

II. Consider that the star destined to announce the birth of Christ was seen by all in the East, but was taken notice of by few, and followed by the Magi only, who received an especial light and grace to do so, thus verifying those words : *Multi sunt vocati, pauci vero electi*—Matth. xx. 16—*Many are called, but few are chosen.* How many interior lights has not Almighty God caused to illumine thy intellect ! How many silent calls has He not made thee feel in thy heart, inviting thee to search after Jesus ! And how

hast thou corresponded ? It would have been a sad misfortune for the Magi had they slighted the invitation of the star and the inspiration of God. No less a loss will it be for thee, if thou leavest the inspirations of God unheeded.

III. Consider the generous promptitude of these holy Magi. They saw no one stir at the invitation of the star, and nevertheless, without the aid of example, without delay, and without knowing where the new king was born, they leave their country, forsake their own comfort, and start on their journey in the midst of winter, fearless of danger and mishaps, to discover the monarch pointed out to them by so wondrous a sign of Heaven. This is what thou oughtest to do when at times thy Lord calls and urges thee to undertake something for His glory, or to exercise some generous act of virtue : thou must not look to what others do, nor be frightened at the difficulties and dangers which self-love depicts to thy imagination, neither must thou seek to escape the trouble such efforts entail, on account of the uncertainty of success : but thou oughtest to obey with promptitude the bidding of Heaven, trusting that thy Saviour will give thee help and strength to fulfil what He demands of thee.

FIFTH DAY OF JANUARY.

Vidimus stellam ejus in oriente et venimus adorare eum.—Matth. ii. 2.

We have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him.

I. CONSIDER that as the three holy kings had undertaken their journey without knowing whither they were going, they leave themselves to the guidance of

the star. Those who traverse the ocean must consult the course of the stars in order to reach their destination : and this was just what the Magi did, and what thou also must do. Our life in this world is a voyage beset with dangers, storms, and quicksands ; whoever wishes to journey safely must be guided by the light of heaven, that is to say, by the maxims of faith and the truths of eternity, which ought to be our faithful guides. Happy art thou, if thou wilt but keep thy eyes fixed on these bright shining stars !

II. Consider how as the Magi drew near to the city of Jerusalem, their guiding star suddenly hid itself from their view, leaving them full of hesitation and sorrow. But not for that do they give over the journey they have undertaken, and accordingly they enter the royal city, and courageously inquire where the birthplace was of the new King of the Jews. It was the intention of Our Lord, in screening the star from sight, to try their faith and constancy, and at the same time to give thee to understand that in the path of perfection thou wilt never lack spiritual desolation, mental darkness, and trials of all sorts ; as then precisely is the time to show thy fidelity and enrich thyself with merits. What has been thy fidelity hitherto in time of tribulation ? Hast thou been constant in keeping up thy courage and persevering in thy accustomed exercises of piety ? It is on these occasions that God alone is the end of our actions, and consequently they are most pleasing to Him.

III. Consider that on inquiring after the birthplace of the new King who had been heralded by the star, the Magi were told by the priests that Bethlehem was the spot foretold by the Prophets in the sacred Scriptures : and thereupon they resumed their journey in that direction without further concern or inquiry. Yet in thy doubts and uncertainties, in thy scruples and perplexities, all the direction of thy superiors and ghostly

fathers are not sufficient for thee. Do but follow their advice, and thou wilt receive light and consolation from Almighty God, as was the case with the holy Magi. But mark here the great blindness of the Jews, and above all of the priests. They point out and show the way to the Gentiles, to enable them to find out the new-born Messiah, so eagerly longed for by all the Jewish people, and in the meantime they do not themselves stir one inch to go and seek Him. This is just what happens in the case of many religious. They teach and preach the way to find Jesus, but they do little or nothing of what they inculcate. Beg thy Lord not to allow thee to fall into such hardness of heart as this, and into a mental blindness attended with such fatal consequences.

THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

Et ecce stella, quam viderant in oriente antecedebat eos, . . . et intrantes domum invenerunt puerum, et procidentem adoraverunt eum.—Matth. ii. 9—11.

And behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them . . . and entering the house they found the Child, and falling down they adored Him.

I. CONSIDER the unspeakable consolation and joy of the Magi on seeing the star again make its appearance, after they had been put in the right path by the priests of the place. The same thing comes to pass with the soul that remains faithful and constant amidst interior desolations, and allows itself to be guided by its director. But their astonishment was much greater at seeing the star become stationary over a miserable shed, and thus indicate the spot where the new King, announced by Heaven, had been born. Whosoever

wishes to find Jesus, must not hope to find Him amidst comforts and grandeur, because He is only to be found in humility and poverty.

II. Consider that the instant they set foot on the threshold, that cave appeared to the eyes of their mind more brilliant and magnificent than any palace. So also when a soul finds Jesus in humility and poverty, how precious and beloved they both become ! By the dazzling rays that emanated from the holy Babe, and much more by the interior light that flashed on their intellects, they recognised Him as King of the Jews and the true Son of God : whereupon, prostrate in body and with the deepest humility of spirit, they adore Him with the most profound acts of supreme worship, and the most tender affection of devotion and love. If but one ray of quickening light and faith were to light up thy interior faculties to recognise that Almighty God who enters thy breast so often, compressed, as it were, under the sacramental species, with how much more reverence wouldst thou not welcome and adore Him ? At least offer Him thy affections with those of the holy Magi.

III. Consider that not content with simply adoring the infant Jesus, they offer Him as well precious gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense, mysteriously acknowledging Him, by the gold, to be king ; by the myrrh, to be man ; and by the frankincense, to be their immortal God. But how much more abundantly were they not rewarded by our Lord, who (as it is piously believed) conferred upon them, in return for their offering of gold, the gift of wisdom ; for the myrrh, incorruption and confirmation in grace ; for the frankincense, spiritual consolations ! It is not enough to adore Jesus by internal acts only ; thou must also openly confess Him by thy good works, and make Him again from thy heart thy offering of gold by thy vow of poverty, of myrrh by thy vow of chastity, and of

frankincense by thy vow of obedience. If thou remainest faithful to thy promise and to the observance of these vows, He will not allow himself to be outdone in generosity. He will give Himself entirely to thee.

SEVENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

Responso accepto in somnis, ne redirent ad Herodem per aliam viam reversi sunt in regionem suam.—Matt. ii. 12.

Having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their country.

I. CONSIDER the consolation the holy magi were given to enjoy during the night that they remained in the presence of the holy Infant, Who silently spoke to their hearts. When they heard the hidden mysteries of the Incarnation unfolded to them by the Blessed Virgin, how well rewarded did they not deem all the disasters endured in their long journey! The labour of seeking Jesus always becomes sweet to him who is so fortunate as to find Him; he can never remain in That presence long enough. What pleasure dost thou take in keeping the holy Infant company? How dost thou relish His conversation, and that of His most holy Mother? This is a sure sign by which to know if thou hast found Jesus.

II. Consider that as the holy magi were in doubt whether they ought to return to Jerusalem in compliance with the promise they had made Herod, they had recourse to Almighty God to make known to them His Will, and they were told in their sleep by an angel to return to their homes by another road, so as not to expose the holy Infant to danger. See here

the true manner of resolving thy doubts, which is to have recourse to God for light, and meanwhile to make use of any other means which human prudence may suggest, and to take advice from experienced and learned men ; for God does not wish to do all Himself. He demands co-operation on our side. However, thou must put thy confidence principally in the fatherly care of God. If thou wilt but act in this manner, thy Lord will teach thee how to escape safely from all dangers, as He did the three holy kings.

III. Consider how, after they had been told by Heaven to change their route, they are not concerned as to whether the journey will be more arduous and wearisome, nor do they pay any attention to the promise they had made Herod of returning to Jerusalem. Learn, hence, when Almighty God or thy superior marks out for thee a certain line of conduct, not to heed either human respect or human prudence, nor yet the very difficulties thou apprehendest in so doing. Thou wilt always be certain to walk in a safe path when the Will of Almighty God is thy guide. The magi returned, therefore, by a different road, after they had found and adored Jesus. Do thou also, after thou hast made an unreserved offering of thyself to the holy Infant, return by a different way : if thou camest full of pride, return by the path of humility : if thou camest with anger in thy heart, return full of meekness, and ready to oblige all : if before thou didst run after vanity and earthly goods, embrace now in good earnest evangelical poverty, and seek after the only real goods, the goods of heaven. *Hæc est via quæ ducit ad vitam*—Matt. vii. 14—*This is the way that leadeth to life.*

EIGHTH DAY OF JANUARY.

Herodes videns quia illusus esset a magis, iratus est valde, et mittens occidit omnes pueros.—Matt. ii. 16.

Herod perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceeding angry, and sending, killed all the male children.

I. CONSIDER how Herod, who was disquieted at the announcement of the new-born King, on seeing himself outreached by the magi, went beside himself with passion. Wherefore, in order to secure himself against being deprived of his kingdom, he came to the determination of having all the male children of Bethlehem slaughtered, without heeding either the barbarous injustice of such a measure, or the horrid butchery of so many innocents. See into what a precipice ambition cast this tyrant headlong. But how many, even amongst religious, allow themselves to be carried away by unworthy and unjust pretensions, and for much less than a kingdom; one will be egged on by his ambition to attain a dignity, another by love of intrigue or by envy at his neighbour's success! Enter into thyself and see what is thy ruling passion, and endeavour to check it by mortification and by recourse to God, lest some day it give thee a murderous stab when thou least expectest it.

II. Consider how Herod, in order to be sure of taking away the life of the new King of the Jews, butchered not only all the children that were born at Bethlehem about the time of the star's appearance, but also all those of the suburbs and neighbourhood of Bethlehem: *a bimatu et infra in omnibus finibus ejus*. What great precaution and diligence did not Herod employ to keep himself on the throne at any cost; but in vain, because *non est sapientia, non est consilium contra Dominum*—Prov. xxi. 30—*There is no wisdom,*

there is no counsel against the Lord. And oughtest not thou to make use of as great precautions to secure for thyself the eternal kingdom that is prepared for thee in heaven, by falling upon and exterminating not only that passion which keeps the strongest hand over thee, but all those as well that may grow up with time and snatch so great a kingdom from thee?

III. Consider what a heart-rending sight it must have been to behold the tears of so many wailing mothers, and the blood of so many little innocents so unjustly massacred by that tyrant, who even in this life met with a just punishment by a most excruciating death. On the other hand, consider that God chose to avail Himself of Herod's ambition in order to crown those innocents with glory, and at the same time to make the birth of the true Messias better known to the world at large. Learn, hence, ever to recognise the loving dispositions of Almighty God in the evils that befall thee and others; for though thy enemy proposes to do thee harm, Almighty God so disposes that that very injury shall turn out to thy greater advantage and to His own greater glory. Most true is it, that he who plots against his neighbour plans his own destruction and his neighbour's triumph.

NINTH DAY OF JANUARY.

Accipe puerum et matrem ejus, et fuge in Ægyptum.
—Matt. ii. 13.

Take the Child and His mother, and fly into Egypt.

I. CONSIDER that in order to save the life of the child Jesus from Herod's plot, the Eternal Father despatches an angel to warn His parents to withdraw

Him from the danger by flight. Almighty God could in many other ways have freed Him from danger without exposing Him to so great inconvenience and suffering. But He preferred not to do so, that thou mightest learn with what anxious care He watches over His favoured ones : not only when He caresses and consoles them, but even when He tries them by persecutions and vexations, as He did His own beloved Son.

II. Consider that the angel's warning was intimated to Joseph as head of the family. Not for this did the mother take offence at seeing one preferred before herself who was so far below her in merit, knowing that Almighty God is wont to make His Will known to us by means of those whom He appoints our superiors, even though they be inferiors as far as merit, learning, and virtue are concerned. Make up thy mind, once for all, to master this great truth, that to be certain of doing the Will of God thou must stand by the advice of thy director and the injunctions of thy superior, even though in many instances thou believest that thou knowest better than they : and why ? simply because such are the means which God has chosen to lead thee along the safe road to heaven.

III. Consider the circumstances of this flight enjoined by the angel. Whilst Joseph is asleep he is bid to suddenly break off his necessary repose and start on his journey in the midst of the night, to betake himself to a country, not indeed of friends, as would have been that of the wise men, but into Egypt, a hostile and pagan country, and there to remain until fresh orders. But these unpleasant circumstances did not hinder Joseph from obeying with cheerfulness of will and with an entire subjection of his own judgment, and he showed himself most happy and pleased to put the Will of Almighty God into execution. Reflect now on thy obedience, and see how thou behavest when anything is commanded thee which

disturbs thy quiet, or obliges thee to quit a spot that is dear to thee to go to some other place that is not quite to thy liking, where thou art not known or taken notice of. But remember that the more freely thou allowest thyself to be handled by obedience, so much the better tool wilt thou be in the hands of God to promote His glory.

TENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

Consurgens accepit puerum et matrem ejus, et secessit in Ægyptum.—Matt. ii. 14.

He arose and took the Child and His mother, and retired into Egypt.

I. CONSIDER what serious hardships Jesus and His parents had to undergo during their long sojourn of seven years in Egypt. They remained unknown in that pagan country, enduring extreme poverty without receiving any assistance in even their greatest need. Joseph was therefore forced to gain a livelihood for his little household by the labour of his hands and the sweat of his brow. Art thou disposed to put up with like poverty, if the disposition of Providence or the arrangements of thy superiors should make it necessary? At least, be determined never to go in quest of superfluities in the service of God. How great consolation it afforded holy S. Joseph to consecrate his labours to save the life of Jesus! Console thyself also when thou encounterest any trial in the service of God, and say with the Apostle: *Patior et non confundor*—2 Tim. i. 12—*I suffer, and am not ashamed.* If only thou hast Jesus by thee, as Joseph had, no labour will be burdensome to thee, nor wilt thou experience the slightest difficulty at having to

spend thy life in the poorest corner or hole in the world.

II. Consider that amongst all the hardships of that holy family nothing gave them greater grief than to see the blindness and impiety of that pagan nation, who in their idols adored the devil. If thou hadst any zeal in thy heart for the honour of God, thou wouldst be much more alive to the offence of God than to thy own interests. Meanwhile they did not cease to help those hapless idolaters by their holy words and holy example. Whosoever has at heart the glory of God and the salvation of souls finds ways, in all places, in all states of life, and at all times, how to help his neighbour: if thou art not in a position to be able to effect as much, at least beware of being a stumbling-block or occasion of scandal to thy brethren.

III. Consider that in the presence of Jesus the idols of those parts of Egypt fell to the ground, these false gods not being able to stand the test of the presence of the true God. How, then, does it come to pass that the idols of thy heart stand so firm when thy God comes sacramentally to thee? For just so many are the idols which thou worshippest as are the inclinations to pride, anger, and excessive love of thy own reputation and comfort which thou fosterest in thy heart. How is it possible that these idols do not fall to the ground when Jesus enters the Egypt of thy heart, especially when He gives thee such an example of humility under the sacramental species, when He puts up with so many affronts, and comes, not indeed to save His own life from Herod's treachery, but to rescue thee from an eternal death, and bestow upon thee a life which will be eternally happy?

ELEVENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

Ascendentibus illis Jerosolymam . . . remansit puer in Jerusalem.—Luc. ii. 43.

They going up to Jerusalem . . . when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem.

I. CONSIDER that the child Jesus went to the feast of the temple, as was the custom, and remained there without the knowledge of His parents, to teach thee two important lessons: firstly, to be punctual and diligent in the observance of the customs of thy Order which concern the honour of God, even though they be not a matter of precept. Jesus was not bound by the law on account of His age, but He preferred to leave thee this beautiful instance of piety, that thou mightest not be remiss in giving good example to thy brethren. The second lesson is that when it is a question of God's honour, thou oughtest to give no heed to human respect. He had no reason to fear that His parents would have put any obstacle in the way of His remaining longer in the temple: and yet He did so secretly to the great grief of Mary and Joseph, because He well knew what a great hindrance it would be to thee if thou madest known the good works thou proposest to undertake in the service of God, to thy friends and relations: and hence He would have thee learn that when it is a question of pleasing God, thou must not shrink from displeasing even those who are dearest to thee.

II. Consider how on the return of the Blessed Virgin and S. Joseph from the temple, seeing that the holy Child was missing, they began to fear lest He had withdrawn Himself through any fault of theirs; wherefore, full of the greatest sorrow imaginable, they immediately set to work to search for Him until on

the third day they found Him. It is the way of Jesus to hide Himself from him who goes back and leaves the temple—I mean, who goes back in the service of God by omitting his accustomed devotions and penances, neglecting the observance of his rule, and making no account of voluntary venial sin. He hides Himself, I say, by taking away from him His interior light and consolation and of His more especial aid : so that his poor soul keeps on going from bad to worse. Woe to thee if thou shouldst be amongst the number of these unhappy ones ! But more unhappy still art thou if thou dost not grieve over thy negligence, and endeavour to seek Jesus with all possible industry.

III. Consider where it was that Jesus was found : not amongst relations nor amidst friends, but in the temple amongst the doctors. Has Jesus hidden Himself from thee ? If so, and thou desirest to find Him, look for Him in the temple, seek for Him amongst the doctors : in the temple, by withdrawing thyself from unnecessary intercourse with others, by treating more earnestly with God in prayer, by keeping thyself more recollected and by being more watchful over thyself ; amidst the doctors, by reading spiritual books and by having recourse to thy director to be taught the way how to find Jesus. Thou must also have recourse in a most especial manner to the Blessed Virgin and S. Joseph, that they may obtain for thee the grace of so well finding Him as never more to lose Him.

TWELFTH DAY OF JANUARY.

Jesus erat subditus illis . . . et proficiebat sapientia, ætate, et gratia apud Deum et apud homines.—Luc. ii. 51.

Jesus was subject to them . . . and advanced in wisdom, age, and grace with God and men.

I. CONSIDER how Jesus during the thirty years He passed in His little cell and workshop at Nazareth, continued always to grow not only in age, but also by giving ever brighter example of virtue: *Apud Deum et apud homines*—before God and men: that is to say, by an ever-increasing intensity of love and zeal for His Father, and of charity and meekness towards those about Him. Thou growest in years of religious life, but what advancement dost thou make in devotion and union with God, in charity and meekness towards thy brethren? God forbid that thou shouldst be one of those who are continually losing ground, and who have hardly been a few years in religion before they begin to neglect prayer and regular observance, to take liberties and lay claim to greater comfort and relaxation. This is the real high-road to perdition.

II. Consider what was the occupation of Jesus during so many years: *Erat subditus illis*—He was subject to them. His occupation was to obey His Mother and S. Joseph in all the little things which were enjoined him, as circumstances demanded from day to day. Hence thou mayest understand that the worth and value of a religious does not consist in the nature of his occupations, but simply and solely in perfect obedience, by doing what is imposed on him by the commands of his prelate and the prescriptions of his rules. It is obedience that ennobles all thy actions, even the most insignificant, by making them most precious in the sight of God. Thou wilt render them

still more precious by offering them to the Eternal Father in union with the merit of those same actions in which Jesus was occupied by obedience up to the age of thirty years.

III. Consider in what manner Jesus performed even the most trivial tasks that were assigned Him. He did everything with this one desire and this one end—to give glory to His Father, and to merit our salvation, which was also the end He had in view when He afterwards was employed in preaching, and when He sacrificed Himself as a victim of expiation for our sins on the cross on Calvary. If thou wishest to arrive quickly at true holiness, endeavour in everything that is imposed on thee by obedience to do always the Will of God, in the manner He wills it, and with the intention He wills it. Thy perfection consists entirely in this. Almighty God always attains the greatest perfection in all, even the smallest, of His works, because He models them after the perfect idea of His own intellect, and orders them to the perfect end of His own glory. Thou also wilt be sure of doing what is most perfect if thou dost what God wills, in the manner He wills it, and for the end He wills it.

THIRTEENTH DAY OF JANUARY.

Venit Jesus a Galilæa in Jordanem ad Joannem, ut baptizaretur ab eo.—Matth. iii. 13.

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized by him.

I. CONSIDER how Christ, before commencing to preach His Gospel and disseminate His heavenly doctrines amongst the people, went to the Jordan to be baptized with publicans and sinners by His precursor

S. John : thus preparing Himself for the great work of our redemption by an act of astounding humility, in publicly passing Himself off as an ordinary sinner. When thou hast any office to fulfil or some work of piety to perform, whether it be in thy monastery or on the mission, by preaching or in any other way, thou dost well to prepare thyself diligently by study or in any other way thou judgest to be most conducive to thy end. But the best and surest preparation is that which Jesus teaches thee by His example—humility. Thou must not overlook such means as human prudence may require, but thou oughtest above everything to humble thyself and recognise thy own incompetence in the sight of Almighty God, praying Him for His aid, which He always grants to the humble and denies to the proud who trust in themselves.

II. Consider that S. John, on perceiving by a revelation of the Holy Ghost that Jesus was the Redeemer, was greatly rejoiced to recognize him as such, and thereupon adored Him with the profoundest submission. But on hearing that He had come to be baptized, he could not but protest, until Jesus said to him : *Sine modo, sic enim decet implere omnem justitiam*—*Suffer it to be so now : for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice ;* which was as much as to say : By means of the humility I now show in taking the appearance of a sinner, and of the obedience I now expect you to exercise, all justice will be fulfilled—that is, all virtue will be exemplified, because the acts of all the different virtues are elicited by means of humility and obedience. What account hast thou hitherto made of these two eminent virtues ?

II. Consider that Christ instituted the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in the act of being baptized Himself : and therefore it was that the heavens opened above His head, that the Holy Ghost came down in the form of a dove upon Him, and that He was declared

by the Eternal Father to be His own beloved Son. All this display was made in order to signify that it is the Sacrament of Baptism that opens for us the kingdom of heaven, by cleansing us from our sins, and that causes the Holy Ghost to descend upon us with His gifts, and that raises us to the dignity of adopted sons of our Heavenly Father. How little thanks dost thou return for so great a benefit, of which nevertheless so large a portion of mankind are deprived ! How far art thou mindful to act up to the obligations thou hast thereby incurred ?

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Vinum non habent . . . nondum venit hora mea . . . quodcunque dixerit vobis, facite.—Joan. ii. 3.

They have no wine . . . My hour is not yet come . . . whatever He shall say to you, do ye.

I. CONSIDER the readiness of the Blessed Virgin to provide for the want of wine at the marriage feast of Cana, and that too without being asked. From this thou mayest understand how much more ready and anxious she is to provide for the spiritual wants of each one of us, now that she has been declared to be the mother of us all by her divine Son when she stood at the foot of the cross ; and as such she ever has her eyes open to see our needs, her heart open to sympathise in them, and her hands open to relieve them with all the tenderness of a mother. Now if such be the case, why dost thou not have immediate recourse to her in thy necessities with the respect and confidence of a son ? How many blessings and how many graces the Blessed Virgin has bestowed on thee without thy even asking for them ! and canst thou entertain any doubt

but that she will hear thee when thou entreatest her for what is needful for thy welfare by so many titles which are so dear to her ?

II. Consider that the Blessed Virgin is no less able to obtain every aid and grace thou standest in need of than she is willing to do so. On her requesting Jesus at the feast of Cana to provide for the dearth of wine, He answered her curtly, saying that His time for working miracles had not yet come : *Quid mihi et tibi est mulier ? Nondum venit hora mea*—*Woman, what is it to Me and to thee ? My hour is not yet come.* But for all that the Blessed Virgin so far prevailed by her earnest entreaties, that she got Him to anticipate His time by changing water into wine. But how far more efficacious are not the petitions she presents to her Son in our behalf, now that she is seated on His right hand as Queen of Heaven, now that she has been appointed treasurer of the riches of the infinite liberality of God, umpire of the inclinations of His heart, agent of His mercy, and warden of the salvation of all men ! S. Bernard tells us : *Omnia voluit nos habere per Mariam*—He has decreed that everything has to come to us through Mary ; but if the power of the Blessed Virgin is so great, and her readiness to help us so sincere, why dost thou doubt about thy prayers being heard when they pass through her hands ?

III. Consider what the Blessed Virgin told the waiters in order to make them succeed in obtaining the miraculous wine : *Quodcunque dixerit vobis, facite*—*Whatever He shall say to you, do ye.* Imagine that she says the same to thee : If, my son, thou wishest my prayers to be efficacious in thy regard, endeavour to fulfil all that Jesus demands of thee, both as a Christian and as a religious.—If the merits and prayers which Jesus presents to His Father as thy advocate, are not enough to save thee without

thy co-operation, neither will the prayers which the Blessed Virgin pours forth in thy behalf be of any avail without thy co-operation. Make therefore frequent recourse to Mary most holy in all thy necessities ; but if thou art not heard, the fault is all thy own, because thou neglectest that which alone can render thy prayers efficacious.

MONDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER
THE EPIPHANY.

Cogitavi dies antiquos, et annos æternos in mente habui.
—Ps. lxxvi. 6.

I thought upon the days of old, and I had in my mind the eternal years.

I. CONSIDER how the psalmist invites thee by his example to reflect in earnest on the past, which has already glided away from thee ; and on the future, which awaits thee for ever : because this is perchance the most wholesome thought on which thou canst dwell. Ponder, therefore, the past, and see how swiftly it hath gone by ; ponder the future, and bear in mind that it will never have an end. Oh, what a wholesome thought is this for thee ! reflect often on it.

II. Consider the reason why this thought will prove so profitable to thee. It is because reflection on the past will enable thee to conceive a higher esteem of eternity, whilst the thought of eternity will lower thy opinion of the past, which has flitted away so quickly, and make thee less anxious for that short term of life that still remains for thee to pass. These two thoughts ought therefore to be brought to bear upon one another, after the example of David, to make

them the more fruitful. If thou wouldst thoroughly understand of how little worth is all that which passes away, compare it with that which never perishes, and say to thyself: Even though I were to live over a hundred years, nay, even though I were to reach the all-but-a-thousand years of Mathusalem, what would so many years be, compared with eternity? A mere nothing: *Tamquam dies hesternæ, quæ præterit*—Ps. lxxxix. 4—*As yesterday, which is past.* Why, then, should I give the preference to the few days of life that still remain, over the never-ending years of eternity? If, again, thou wouldst form a sterling judgment on the value of eternity, measure it by the past, and say to thyself: When millions and millions of years shall have elapsed, eternity will be only at its commencement, for ever beginning anew: and surely I must not overlook the interests of a state of existence which has no end, for those of a life that comes to an end so soon? This is the rule by which to form a just esteem of time and eternity.

III. Consider that if we come to examine this life of ours more minutely, we find that there is no present at all, there is but the past and the future: just as there is no rest in the waters of a river that flow by in a continuous stream; on which account Holy Scripture says of the life of us mortals: *Omnes nos morimur, et quasi aqua . . . dilabimur*—2 Reg. xiv. 14—*We all die, and like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth:* for time glides away more swiftly than any river, and no sooner dost thou assert that it is present than it is already past. Behold to what insignificance the only time thou canst call thine own is reduced—to a moment, a point; since the past is no longer in thy power, and thou art not in a position to know what the future will bring with it. It is only in eternity that a real present is to be found—a present which never passes away and will never

come to an end. Think therefore seriously whether it is better worth thy while to enjoy the fleeting present of this life, and then pine for ever in a miserable eternity, or to put up with a little hardship in this short life, and be happy in a never-ending eternity of bliss.

TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Obsecro vos, tanquam advenas et peregrinos, abstinere vos a carnalibus desideriis, quæ militant adversus animam.—1 Pet. ii. 11.

I beseech you, as pilgrims and strangers, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul.

I. CONSIDER that during man's probation on earth he can act in the character of either citizen, stranger, or pilgrim. They act in this world as citizens, who, forgetful of the Christian profession, pretend to have no other fatherland than this, living like the Gentiles, *Qui spem non habent*—1 Thess. iv. 12—*Who have no hope.* Those again live here as strangers who indeed admit that paradise is their fatherland, but meanwhile pay greater attention to their earthly interests than to their heavenly destination. Those, lastly, live in the world as pilgrims who not only claim paradise as their true country, but aspire after it, and do not wish for anything in the world save what is sufficient to maintain them from day to day. To which of these three classes dost thou belong? In thy character of religious, thou certainly oughtest to live on earth as a pilgrim.

II. Consider that as he who would live in this world as a pilgrim—or even as a stranger—must guard him-

self from fixing his affections on the goods of earth, so also, and with much greater reason, must he scrupulously refrain from all desires of the flesh, because it is these that most of all tie a man down to the world, and bedim his intellectual powers by effacing even the remembrance of the future. Hence observe that, according to the Apostle, it is not enough for thee to keep aloof from the deeds of the flesh, thou must check its desires also : because in this case we have to deal with a vice that must be curbed from the very outset, originating, as it often does, from some curiosity in reading, or the uttering of some little word, or from not smothering a thought on the instant. *A scintilla una augetur ignis*—Eccl. xi. 34—*Of one spark cometh a great fire.*

III. Consider that the Apostle does not say, *Obsecro vos carere carnalibus desideriis*—*I beseech you to be devoid of all carnal desires*, but *abstinere vos*—*to refrain yourselves*, because there are but few even amongst saints who are entirely free from such desires : but they must, on the very first instant that they present themselves, be put to flight and resisted, avoiding all parley with them by flight and by turning the attention elsewhere, because these desires are overcome much more easily by flight than by open war : thou hast to effect this flight by avoiding the occasions, by a guard over thy senses, and the mortification of that flesh which is the hotbed whence these desires derive their origin. *Unde bella ?* says S. James . . . *nonne ex concupiscentiis vestris, quæ militant in membris vestris*—Jac. iv. 1—*From whence are wars ? . . . are they not from your concupiscences, which war in your members ?*

WEDNESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Utinam frigidus esses, aut calidus, sed quia tepidus es, nec frigidus, nec calidus, incipiam te evomere ex ore meo.—
Apoc. iii. 18.

I would thou wert cold or hot, but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.

I. CONSIDER that the lukewarmness so hateful to God is not that of a soul which is abandoning the cold state of a bad life and is resolving itself into the warmth of an orderly life, but it is that of a soul which is going back from piety to the chill of a lax tenor of life by falling away from its first fervour. It is a lesser evil, in its consequences at least, never to have known what the service of God was (and therefore never to have embraced it), than once to have known and embraced it with fervour and afterwards to have abandoned it; because such a one will continually go from bad to worse until he is altogether perverted. A pan of hot water that is taken off the fire little by little becomes quite cold. So also, if thou withdrawest thyself from the fire of thy first fervour by forsaking prayer, mortification, and regular observance, thou wilt continually go back from bad to worse, and become hateful to Almighty God.

II. Consider why this second sort of lukewarmness, that namely of a soul which from hot becomes cold, is so hateful to Almighty God. The reason is, because in the former case, when, that is to say, a soul has not yet given herself up to the practice of virtue because it has never been acquainted with it, it is no great matter of wonder that Almighty God should deal mercifully towards it by enticing it from time to time to great spiritual fervour; but on what plea can

Almighty God be moved to mercy towards one who has once embraced virtue and then abandoned it? Many a sinner has become a great saint, but how few there are who when once they have gone astray have afterwards returned to the pursuit of sanctity? As a general rule, when once a good habit is lost, it is never regained : *Spiritus vadens et non rediens*.—Ps. lxxvii. 39 —*A wind that goeth and returneth not*. What wonder therefore is it that Almighty would rather that thou wert actually cold, but not yet converted, than tepid, as thou now art, and beginning to be perverted. If thou by thy lukewarmness preparest thyself to be rejected by Almighty God, He will cast thee off for very nausea.

III. Consider in what consists this rejection with which God threatens thy lukewarmness. It consists in not keeping that loving watch over thee any longer which He did before, in not fondling thee any more with His spiritual endearments, in allowing thee to be overtaken by irksomeness, sadness, and temptations, and last of all, in even letting thee fall into a hardened impiety, which is infallibly followed by eternal damnation. All this comes about little by little. As therefore Almighty God has not yet altogether vomited thee from His mouth, reform thy life speedily and make good the past, renew thy determination to serve Him faithfully, and take fresh courage, for He says : *Incipiam te evomere*—*I will begin to vomit thee forth*—to give thee time so to mend thy conduct, that He have not reason to be angry with thee any longer.

THURSDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Defecit manna, postquam comederunt de fructibus terræ ; nec usi sunt ultra cibo illo filii Israel.—Jos. v. 12.

And the manna ceased after they ate of the corn of the land, neither did the children of Israel use that food any more.

I. CONSIDER that there is the same difference between heavenly consolation and earthly pleasures as there was between the manna that came down from heaven and the produce of the earth. Manna was a food fit, by reason of its excellence, for angels, which served as nourishment for the Hebrews, preserved them from sickness, and afforded their palates every kind of flavour : *Deserviens uniuscujusque voluntati*—Sap. xvi. 21—*Serving every man's will* ; so that they had no need to go in quest of any other food. Just such are heavenly consolations. They are an angelic food, that preserves the health of the soul and imparts to it a zest that so far surpasses all other delights, that whoever has once experienced it no longer cares about any other pleasure. Earthly delights, on the contrary, are creature comforts common to brute beasts, which not only do not ward off ailments of soul and body, but often cause them, and with all their different savours are never capable of satisfying us. Now which of these two sorts of consolation appears to thee the more worthy of being sought after ? Again, the manna was given to the Hebrews to make up for the dainties of Egypt, of which they had deprived themselves to follow their God into the desert ; and so also these heavenly consolations are given to such only as deprive themselves of earthly pleasures to serve Almighty God. If, therefore, thou desirest to

enjoy an abundance of spiritual sweetness, cast aside altogether all earthly delights.

II. Consider that no sooner did the Hebrews begin to make use again of the produce of the earth for their sustenance, than the manna failed them. So also is Almighty God accustomed to withdraw His consolations from the soul that begins to run after the foolish pleasures of the world. When thou wert first called by God to leave the Egypt of the world and to enter holy religion, He regaled thee and feasted thee with so great consolation, that thou didst cheerfully cast aside all the wealth of thy house and of the whole world. But if now thou lackest this consolation, the fault is all thy own, because thou continually goest in quest of earthly pleasures. It is not the wish of Our Lord that he who seeks to satisfy his animal appetites should partake of the delicacies of His royal table.

III. Consider that Almighty God leaves the soul at times, as it were fasting, deprived of every sort of consolation and beset with trials of all sorts, in order thus to test it, and so perfect it: *Replevit me amaritudinibus*—Thren. iii. 15.—*He hath filled me with bitterness.* But generally speaking this does not last long, and even when it does, He makes up for the desolation by an interior soothing, not indeed altogether full of sweetness, but more substantial, like the hearth-cakes of Elias. Even this refreshment of lively faith and firm hope alone, dry as it may appear, affords greater consolation than all the pastimes of the world, and the soul that experiences it would not exchange its bitterness for all the sweets of this world, well knowing its great worth. Learn therefore from this to scorn all earthly pleasures and dainty living if thou wouldst fain taste either the sweetness of the manna of thy God or the more substantial food of divine grace, thy only real stay and support.

FRIDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Gratiam fideijussoris ne obliviscaris, dedit enim pro te animam suam.—Eccl. xxix. 19.

Forget not the kindness of thy surety; for He hath given His life for thee.

I. CONSIDER that this thy most devoted surety is no other than Jesus, Who seeing that thou wert eternally lost on account of thy utter impotence to appease the justice of God, most graciously offered to give bail for thee and to pay all the debts thou hadst contracted with Almighty God, and that, too, at the cost of so great humiliation, of so much anguish, and at the price of His own most precious Blood. Neither was He in any shape or form bound to do thee this great favour, but He was moved to do so simply and solely out of sheer goodness and mercy: *Liberabit pauperem. . . cui non erat adjutor*—Ps. lxxi. 12—*He shall deliver the needy that had no helper.* If therefore thou hast any feeling of natural gratitude, *gratiam fideijussoris ne obliviscaris*—*forget not the kindness of thy surety*—and strive to be less ungrateful than thou hast hitherto been.

II. Consider that when any one gives bail for a friend, he does so on the understanding that his friend will exert himself to the utmost to pay off as much as he can of his debt, or at least in the hope of being paid back again some time or other. No one would ever offer to give security for another, if he knew beforehand that by doing so he were certain to be liable for the amount without any chance of repayment. Jesus alone has been so fond a friend as to take all thy debts on His own shoulders with the certain knowledge that He would have to pay them, because He pledged Himself to the rigorous justice of His Eternal Father for a debtor who was not only

exceedingly poor and utterly unable to make his losses good, as is thy case, but even more—for a thankless and ungrateful debtor, as thou hast ever been towards Him. And yet He has not only made Himself thy surety, but has paid off thy debts at an immense sacrifice, in order to give thee courage and make the path of salvation easy for thee. Dost thou not consider thyself to lie under the greatest obligations towards so loving a surety and gracious a benefactor?

III. Consider what thy conduct ought to be in Jesus' regard. Thou oughtest to do just as a poor debtor does towards his friend who has offered and given security for him. Thou oughtest to be grateful for the benefit, acknowledge it, express thy thanks for it, and do all in thy power to make some return for it: so that if Jesus has shed a sea of tears, sweat and blood on thy account, do thou be willing to shed at least one drop for Him in return; if Jesus has endured so many affronts and evil speeches, do thou at least cheerfully put up with some little scoff or injury for His sake; if Jesus has gone so far as to die for thee on the tree of the Cross, do thou strive at least to live for Him: *Anima mea illi vivet*—Ps. xxi. 31—*To Him my soul shall live*; to devote thy whole attention to pleasing Him, to proclaim His praises, and show that thou art not ungrateful to thy surety, Who has so loved thee as to deliver Himself up on thy behalf and free thee from a sea of eternal woe, and at the same time entitle thee to an infinity of boundless wealth. Surely thou wilt not, please God, be one of those who turn their backs upon Him: *Repromissorem fugit peccator*—Eccl. xxix. 20—*The sinner fleeth from his surety.*

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SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Lux venit in mundum, et dilexerunt homines magis tenebras quam lucem.—Is. iii. 19.

The light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light.

I. CONSIDER that Christ came into the world to rescue man *de tenebris*, from the darkness of error in his intellect, and of guilt in his will, and to raise him up, in *admirabile lumen suum*, to the wondrous light of heavenly truth and solid virtue. Still there are but few who avail themselves of this divine light, because so many shut their eyes to it altogether, as heathens do *rebelles luminis*—Job xxiv. 13—who are *rebellious to the light*; and so many others even amongst the faithful who although they receive the light of faith by which they believe, nevertheless will not give admittance to the light of the commandments, which teach them to do good and attend to the performance of their duty: *Nolunt intelligere, ut bene agant*—Ps. xxxv. 4—*They will not understand that they may do well.* Would to God that at least in the cloister there were none of these lovers of darkness, who keep the shutters barred to the light in order not to see the obligations of their state, of their vows, and of their charges, and in order not to hear the reproaches of conscience. Such as these are in danger of damnation, for they not only are in darkness, but wilfully abide and settle down in it—*sedent in tenebris et in umbra mortis*, Luc. i. 79.

II. Consider that although there are not many in the cloister who deliberately *sedent in tenebris*—*sit in darkness*, there are not wanting those who would fain keep the inlets through which the light streams into their souls neither quite closed nor altogether open: they wish to have light, but they do not want

too much of it, thinking that they will not be able to turn it to good account. These are the souls that like the light but prefer darkness : *dilexerunt magis tenebras quam lucem* ; they live a godly life after a certain fashion, but neglect to make frequent recourse to God for His holy grace ; they dispense with spiritual reading ; they bid farewell to the solitude of their cell to spend their time in conversation and idle amusements. Shouldst thou be one of these, consider the great wrong of which thou art guilty towards God, and the sad harm thou dost thy own self, inasmuch as thy Lord has no other end in view in giving thee His light than to direct thee in the path of salvation without fear of stumbling, and thou, on thy part, canst not journey with safety or ease unless thou hast this light : *Ambulabunt Gentes in lumine tuo*—Is. lx. 3—*The Gentiles shall walk in thy light.*

III. Consider the happiness of those religious who open their souls without reserve to the rays of divine grace, from the knowledge that they can do good only in proportion to the light they receive ; therefore it is that they yearn after it and are continually putting up most fervent prayers for it : *Deus meus illumina tenebras meas*—Ps. xvii. 29—*O my God, enlighten my darkness.* They love to withdraw themselves from the hubbub of the world, they prefer to listen to spiritual discourses rather than worldly news, to take advice, receive correction, and be constantly occupied in works of piety, since all these things are the channels by which Almighty God pours His light into their souls in greater fulness. Thou seest therefore what thou hast to do to obtain abundance of light ; thou must throw open the windows of thy soul as wide as thou art able to the grace of God, and keep them closed as far as thou canst to everything earthly and worldly.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum, sed tantum dic verbo, etc. Audiens autem Jesus miratus est.—Matth. viii. 8.

Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word, etc. And Jesus, hearing this, marvelled.

I. CONSIDER that Jesus put on an air of seeming wonder at the virtue of this centurion, not indeed as though it were not already well known to Him, but in order the better, by the example of this soldier, to shame the chosen nation of the Jews, so highly favoured of Heaven, making them see themselves outdone by the faith of a Gentile. Thou, by the grace of a religious vocation, belongest to a people chosen and beloved of God, but what shame oughtest thou not to feel on seeing that there are so many living in the midst of the world who are more detached from the things of this earth than thou art, so many who are more ardent lovers of the interests of Heaven, and who cling more closely to the Cross of Christ! If thou knowest not now how to blush at this, thou wilt have but too great reason to do so on the last day, when thou wilt see so many who, seculars though they be, will surpass thee in the virtues proper to thy religious state.

II. Consider the faith of the centurion, who, though untaught by the writings of the prophets, nevertheless recognised Jesus as the true Son of God, present everywhere by reason of His immensity, and able, by His omnipotence, to restore health to his paralysed servant. The Jews, on the contrary, in spite of the manifold proofs He gave to them that He was the Son of God, would not at any cost recognise Him as such, and even contrived His death. This is no great

matter for wonder, because the light of faith is not wont to shine on souls that are overcast by the clouds of passion and besmeared with the mud of vice. If thou desirest that the light of faith which thou didst receive at thy baptism should retain all its lustre, thou must needs feed it by virtuous works, otherwise it will become a dead faith. *Fides sine operibus mortua est*—Jac. ii. 26—*Faith without works is dead.*

III. Consider the great humility of the centurion, who, seeing that Christ was about to visit him in his own home in order to cure his servant, exclaimed: "*Domine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum.*" Holy Church puts these words into thy mouth every time that thou receivest Holy Communion, and thou shouldst bear them deeply graven in thy heart, by seriously pondering on these three things—on the vileness of thy nothingness, on the heinousness and number of thy sins, on thy ingratitude for, and ill use of, so many benefits received from the infinite liberality of God. Remember that it is by humility alone that thou canst even hope to cancel these heavy debts and obligations, and to become pleasing in the sight of God, Who gives His grace to the humble only. *Humilibus dat gratiam*—1 Pet. v. 5.

MONDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Si quis existimat se aliquid esse, cum nihil sit, ipse se seducit.—Gal. vi. 3.

If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

I. CONSIDER that if thou couldst but once understand thoroughly what the Apostle here says to thee, all thy

vainglory would come to an end. Whence comes it that thou art continually becoming blinder and blinder to real self-knowledge, priding thyself on thy own capabilities, whereas really and truly thou art of thyself a mere naught. If thou desirest to acquire solid humility, persuade thyself, once for all, that of thyself *nihil es—thou art nothing*—and that all that thou ownest, sin only excepted, belongs to Almighty God.

II. Consider that *si existimas te aliquid esse—if thou thinkest thyself something*—in the order of nature, thou art deceived, because both as regards thy being and the exercise of its innate activity, thou thyself art a mere cipher. What wert thou, pray, so many ages before thou wert born? And yet of thyself thou art now just what thou wert before thy existence, because it is God Who has given thee thy being, and Who preserves it for thee now. So also all the faculties which originate in thy being belong to Him Who gave thee thy being, and preserves thee in it. The work which the shadow of a sun-dial does, as it faithfully points out hour after hour, does not belong to the shadow, but to the sun, on which the shadow depends. So also dost thou depend on Almighty God, with this only difference, that the shadow performs its operations without willing them, and thou performest thine with the concurrence of thy will. But this very will is the gift of God, Who endowed thee with liberty, and maintains it for thee, concurring in each act that thou elicitest. Now if such be the case, *ubi est gloriatio tua—Rom. iii. 27—where is thy boasting?* Why so much vainglory about thy cleverness, shrewdness, and talent, all of which are the gifts of Almighty God?

III. Consider that in the order of grace thou art brought to a state even lower than nothing, if thou art in a state of sin. But I would fain suppose thee to be in a state of grace; but even then, of thyself

nihil es—thou art nothing, and although thou hast good reason to be thankful, there is certainly no room for boasting. To effect any meritorious action, thou needest in the first place habitual grace, to place thee in a state of grace and make thee capable of doing good; thou, moreover, needest the concurrence of actual grace to enable thee to perform it. It is like what comes to pass in the exercise of the faculty of vision—a sound eye is not enough if thou wishest to see, thou requirest always the aid of the medium of light. Now if all this is the free gift of God, *ubi est gloriatio tua?* what occasion hast thou to boast? Perhaps thou wouldst claim as thy own thy co-operation with grace? But art thou not aware that this very co-operation is due to the grace with which God follows thee up? *Sine Me nihil potestis facere—without Me thou canst do nothing—*says Christ, to give thee to understand that His grace is needful for thee, not only at the beginning of thy spiritual life, but step by step, and at every instant, up to thy last breath—because without it thou canst do simply nothing at all. Do not, therefore, deceive thyself; the blunder would be too gross.

TUESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Sicut fulgur exit ab oriente et parit usque in occidentem, ita erit adventus Filii hominis.—Matth. xxiv. 27.

For as lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

I. CONSIDER how, as soon as a dying man has breathed his last, he sees Christ appear before him as his Judge. Our Lord's appearing is likened in the Gospel to a flash

of lightning—*sicut fulgur*—because as lightning brings with it its flash of light, its crash of thunder, and the shock of its stroke, so also when Christ comes to judgment the first effect of His presence will be such a flash of interior light as will discover to the soul, in the twinkling of an eye, all the evil it has done since the first use of reason, all the good it has left undone, all the good it has done badly ; not a passing thought, not a hasty glance, not an idle word, will there be that will not appear in the midst of this light. Oh, what a widely different judgment will not the soul pass on its own faults when seen by that light, to what it did in life ! If thou art wise, provide for thyself in time, by being more exact in thy examinations of conscience and by making little account of no fault whatever, so as not to have to undergo a more rigorous sentence at the tribunal of Christ from a judgment which the greatest saints have so much dreaded.

II. Consider that, after beholding the light that accompanies this examination, the soul will hear the crash of that just and unchangeable sentence which will go forth from the mouth of the Judge Himself, and remain indelibly impressed on its memory. If guilty of grievous sin, it will be cast into eternal flames in company with the devils ; if only stained by lesser faults, it will be led by its angel guardian to pay its debts in purgatory ; if already cleansed in this life from all guilt, by means of mortification and penance, it will be borne away, in company with Christ, to take possession of His blissful kingdom. One of these lots must shortly befall thee. Choose which thou wilt. *Ecce ego demonstro vobis viam vitæ et viam mortis*—Jer. xxi. 8—*Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.*

III. Consider what will be the shame and despair of a soul on finding itself imprisoned in the dark abyss of hell, there to linger in eternal flames ; and for

what ?—for the smoke of a paltry honour, for a brutish pleasure, for a short-lived gain. Consider, likewise, the remorse of those souls who, through their want of love for mortification and regular observance, will see themselves condemned to atone for faults that they might so easily have cancelled in this life by a little penance, to the increase of their own merit and glory, and to atone for them by years and years of purgatory, subjected to sufferings in degree far beyond any pain to be found in this life. And yet how many there are who put off to the next life the payment of the debt they owe to the justice of God ! S. Theresa saw in a vision the actual condition of a great number of souls entering eternity, and of them all she saw but three go straight to heaven without passing through purgatory : one was the soul of S. Peter of Alcantara, the second that of a Carmelite lay brother, the third that of a Dominican friar. Reflect now, for a moment, which is better for thee, *Fonte purgari quam igne*, as S. Pacian says—to blot out thy sins by the tears of penance in this life, or by the fire of purgatory in the next ?

WEDNESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Vidi impium superexaltatum et elevatum, sicut cedros Libani, et transivi, et ecce non erat, et quæsi eum; et non est inventus locus ejus.—Ps. xxxvi. 35.

I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like cedars of Libanus. And I passed by, and lo he was not : and I sought him, and his place was not found.

I. CONSIDER that this lofty position of the wicked consists in the honour, popularity, rank and fortune

which they enjoy ; and by this elevation is meant their pride and self-conceit, by reason of which they look upon themselves as altogether above the ordinary condition of men and not liable to corruption, like unto the cedars of Libanus, just as though they had never to die. Hence they dote on riches and grandeur as though they were never to lose them : they pamper the body as though it were not one day to become itself the food of worms. But wait a little, and thou wilt see what is the end of all this show and glitter.

II. Consider that thou wilt not have long to wait ere thou beholdest a change of scene. In an instant all is reversed : therefore David declares, *transivi, et ecce non erat*—in the twinkling of an eye the bright flash had passed away. Recollect thyself now for a little, and think over in thy mind what has become of all the state of those wealthy men of high degree whom thou hast known in thy own lifetime, who were made so much of and lived so sumptuously ? Acknowledge then to thyself that it was not real grandeur, but paltry emptiness and a mere sham. Just like one who dreams, and fancies he is a king on his throne ! And wilt thou admire and value an imaginary greatness like this ? Rather love and esteem the only true and lasting greatness, which is to be found in virtue alone. *Gloria nostra testimonium bonæ conscientie*—2 Cor. i. 12—*Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience.*

III. Consider that the Psalmist wisely says that when he happened to behold the greatness of the wicked, he did not tarry to gaze at it, but went his way. If thou payest over great attention to the prosperity of worldlings and pausest to admire the magnificence of their equipage, the richness of their apparel, and their throng of attendants, thou wilt run the risk of incurring great spiritual injury, much in the same way as a loiterer would who stops to admire

a handsome woman. When therefore thou chancest to come across any display of worldly greatness, say with earnestness to Almighty God : *Averte oculos meos, ne videant vanitatem*—Ps. cxviii. 37—*Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity* ; and pass over in thy mind and reflect what will shortly be the end of all this ; turn thy thoughts to the grave, where their bodies will rot ; ponder over that yawning abyss of hell, where they will suffer agonies for ever ; consider the glory of Paradise, where they will never set foot. Thou wilt never find a better way of clearly seeing the fleeting folly of all worldly grandeur than by fixing thy thoughts on the great truths of eternity. However, though it be hurtful for thee to loiter in the consideration of worldly prosperity so long as it is present to thee, yet is it of great profit to consider it when it has passed away. Go, then, and search after that wealthy grandee who was so haughty in life, and look for him when he is dead amidst his sumptuous palaces, and his pleasant country seats, and his costly furniture, and thou wilt not succeed in finding him : *Quæsi vi eum, et non est inventus locus ejus*—*I sought him, and his place was not found.*

THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Si quis putat se religiosum esse, non refrænans linguam suam, sed seducens cor suum, hujus vana est religio.—Jac. i. 26.

If any man thinks himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

I. CONSIDER that if it is necessary for all pious persons who make it their duty to serve Almighty God in a

more especial manner, to know how to bridle their tongues, it is much more necessary for thee, who art bound by thy vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and enjoyest the name of religious as being peculiar to thy state. For if thou art engaged in the exercise of a contemplative life, it is of great moment that thou shouldst know how to bridle thy tongue, as silence makes thee a fit subject for the gift of union with God. If thou art engaged in active life, much more oughtest thou to know how to bridle thy tongue, in order that when conversing with thy neighbour thou mayest speak without giving scandal and without slipping thyself; indeed, in this case, thou oughtest to be able both to hold thy peace and to speak at the proper time: *tempus tacendi et tempus loquendi*. What command hast thou acquired over thy tongue up to the present moment? If thou hast not learnt to do this, thou hast no right to glory in the name of religious, because thy righteousness is vain and empty.

II. Consider that no one can ever so thoroughly master his own tongue as that it should not at times play him some trick or other: *Lingua nullus hominum domare potest*—Jac. iii. 8—*The tongue no man can tame*. Still it is thy duty to make every effort to curb it and hold it under the sway of reason, which, as it reigns over the other members of the body, so also with far greater reason ought to command the tongue. The other faculties of the body, such as the taste, sight and hearing, transgress as a general rule in only one and the same sort of sin; but the tongue is capable of offending in every kind, and is therefore called *Universitas iniquitatis*—Jac. iii. 6—*a world of iniquity*, partaking as it does in the guilt of even those sins which do not immediately concern it, by teaching, advising, or commanding them. Thus in order to be safe from all sins of the tongue, one must first have learnt how to subdue all his passions: *Custodium vias*

meas ut non delinquam in lingua mea—Ps. xxxviii. 2—*I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue.* Hence thou canst not flatter thyself on being a true religious if thou curbest not thy tongue, because this is a sign that thou hast not yet overcome thy passions of anger, haughtiness, envy, and the rest.

III. Consider that a religious often falls into the mistake of being too free in the use of his tongue, deceiving himself—*seducens cor suum*—for he will break the silence he ought to observe under the pretext that the bow, if kept strung too long, will break. He will be eloquent in his own praises to win for himself the esteem he covets. He will blame the actions of his superiors, he will grumble against his neighbour because in his opinion they do not flatter him enough. He will waste his time in conversation and in gossip about every conceivable sort of nonsense and worldly news, to gain the goodwill of others. But hold for certain that if thou art overfree in the use of thy tongue, thy heart is gone astray: set thy crooked opinions straight, and make them the object of a special sifting, so as not to throw dust into thy own eyes. *Nolite seduci*—*be not deceived*—dissipated conversation always does harm, and much more so when it comes from the mouth of a religious, who makes profession of holiness of life.

FRIDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem, in die mala liberabit eum Dominus.—Is. xl. 1.

Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor : the Lord will deliver him in the evil day.

I. CONSIDER in the first place who it is that is here styled blessed by the Psalmist. It is he who on beholding Christ, poor in life and naked in death, is not staggered at this so mean an appearance, but penetrates further, and in Jesus beholds the Godhead, yielding himself to the guidance of faith and not of the senses. Therefore is he called blessed : *Beati qui non viderunt et crediderunt*—Joan. xx. 29—*Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.* But how few there are who act in this manner. If thou didst but realise that under the disguise of shame and disgrace He lies hidden Who is thy all and thy every good, how couldst thou ever feel ashamed to follow Him in His humiliation ? Endeavour to understand this as thoroughly as possible, and thou wilt reap the benefit of it at the hour of death—that hour so full of danger and fright ; for no one is then more especially protected by Jesus than he who can say with truth that he has been faithful to Him in life, and followed Him in the midst of disgrace.

II. Consider who, in the second place, is here called blessed. It is he who on seeing some poverty-stricken wretch, well understands that under the rags and tatters of that poor creature Christ Himself is concealed, Who when on earth made profession of the most abject poverty, and desires to do so still in the person of the poor, declaring : *Quod uni ex minimis meis fecistis, mihi fecistis*—Matt. xxv. 40—*As long as*

you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me. On this account he is easily moved to give him relief if in his power, or at least to respect, sympathise with, and console such a one, even as he would do towards Christ Himself. One who acts in this way is called blessed, because he has the sterling merit of that charitable deed shown towards the poor from a motive of faith in honour of Jesus: which is not equally true in the case of one who shows charity from a mere natural feeling of pity, for even infidels are capable of this much. As a reward for this kindness, so graciously shown towards the poor, thou art promised freedom from all those ills that may overtake thee at the hour of death, whether these evils be of guilt or punishment. Thou wilt atone for the evils of punishment by the satisfactory merit attached to this kindness, and for the evils of guilt by obtaining the grace to enable thee to be truly contrite. Oh, how thou oughtest to have at heart the exercise of this kind charity so far as thy state of life allows it !

III. Consider who, in the third place, is styled blessed ; it is he who does not wait to be asked for relief, but is the first to think for the wants of the poor and forestall their needs, and has their happiness at heart ; going in search of prisoners in their dungeons, of the sick in the hospitals, to provide for their wants, to give them consolation, and become their counsellor and protector. In his own estimation he derives greater benefit himself from this conduct than the poor man he relieves. If thou actest in this way, thou also art most certainly blessed, because at the hour of death thy Lord will take thy defence against thy infernal foes into His own hands. In order to gain for thyself such a protector at that dread hour, it is only right that thou shouldst exert thyself as far as thou canst in behalf of the poor.

SATURDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Voluntarie peccantibus nobis post acceptam notitiam veritatis, jam non relinquitur pro peccatis hostia : terribilis autem quædam expectatio judicii.—Hæbr. x. 26.

If we sin wilfully after having the knowledge of the truth, there is now left no sacrifice for sins, but a certain dreadful expectation of judgment.

I. CONSIDER who are here meant by those who sin after having the knowledge of the truth. They are in a particular manner apostates, who, after having been called to serve Almighty God in the holy cloister, and embrace the evangelical counsels, afterwards relax, little by little, and at last abandon Him. Of these, again, there are two kinds : some there are that are deserters, throw away their religious habit and return again to the world ; others there are who, whilst they retain their habit, cast aside the ways of a religious, and reassume the manners and ways of acting of the world. However, what does it avail thee not to be amongst the first sort of apostates, if perchance thou art of the number of the second, since both are liable to the punishment with which the apostle threatens them ?

II. Consider that it is said of such as these, that they sin wilfully, *post acceptam notitiam*—after having the knowledge of the truth : because there are many instances in which men sin blinded by passion, without well knowing what evil they are doing, whereas apostates sin with their eyes wide open, deliberately turning their backs on the light of the divine sun which was shining on them. What wonder, therefore, is it if it be affirmed of such as these that *jam non relin-*

quitur hostia pro peccatis—there is now left no sacrifice for sin? For Jesus cannot say to the Eternal Father, in their behalf, *Dimitte illis neque enim sciunt quid faciant*—Luc. xxiii. 34—*forgive them, for they know not what they do*, since they are perfectly aware of the guilt of their wicked lives, of the scandal that thence arises to those around them, of the displeasure they thereby give Almighty God, and of the danger of eternal damnation which threatens them. These are all truths which they have over and over again considered in the bright light of a spiritual retreat, but which they nevertheless recklessly despise. Art thou not horrified at the sight of such a sad state? Learn to distrust thyself, because it is a state into which one falls little by little.

III. Consider how from time to time these hapless individuals are smitten by the memory of the judgment to come, which is great enough to disturb and embitter that false liberty and that deceitful gaiety which they grasp at either inside or outside of their monastery, and to make them shrink with terror from the thought. But how much more awful will not the remembrance be to them at the hour of death, when they will shortly have to appear before the judgment-seat of that Lord to Whom they will have to answer for such faithless breaches of their promises! These are the ones who, in both the particular and general judgment, will be most of all blamed by Jesus Christ, and condemned to more awful punishment; because of all a prince's enemies, none are so hateful as rebels. If thou art not filled with awe at the thought of these terrible consequences, fear and tremble lest thou thyself be not far off from being reckoned among the number of these rebels.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Ascendente Jesu in naviculam, ecce ventus magnus factus est in mari, ipse vero dormiebat.—Matth. viii. 24.

When He entered into the boat . . . behold a great tempest arose in the sea . . . but He was asleep.

I. CONSIDER that whilst the disciples were in the boat with Jesus, Who was asleep, a great tempest arose, which threatened them with destruction. So also the souls of the just, who are united with Christ by grace, are never without storms, either of trials, or temptations, or dangers, which is a permission of Our Lord either in punishment of some tepidity or negligence on their part, or else in order to ground them well in humility, and give them reason to betake themselves with greater earnestness to Almighty God for help. If, therefore, thou shouldst find thyself in difficulties, try and humble thyself and remain firm, well knowing that it is not the intention of thy Saviour to abandon thee in sending thee that temptation or that trial, but that He wishes to try thy fidelity, and make thee more fervent in His service.

II. Consider how, on the disciples finding themselves in such danger of being lost, they hastened to awaken Our Lord, saying to Him, *Domine salva nos perimus*—*Lord, save us, we perish.* This is just what Our Lord demands of thee when thou findest thyself in danger amidst the storms of violent temptations and severe trials. He expects thee to humble thyself by avowing thy own weakness, to arouse thyself from thy tepidity, and apply with greater eagerness for help from Almighty God, Who keeps His eyes closed on such as are negligent, and watches over the interests of such as are fervent. Learn also, from the disciples, how

thou oughtest to pray when in danger : *Domine, salva nos perimus* ; in other words : O Thou Who art my Master, and the Master of all creatures, allow me not to perish, and permit not Thy enemies to glory in my destruction, for Thou art well able to defend me against them—*Salva nos*.

III. Consider that the disciples were blamed by Christ, not, indeed, for having awaked Him and entreated Him to get them out of the danger, but for the little faith they showed by being over-afraid of the storm, and placing too little trust in their Divine Master : *Quid timidi estis modicæ fidei ?—Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith ?* I would fain hope that thou be not doubly blameworthy—in the first place, by not having recourse to Almighty God at all in thy needs, and, in the second place, when thou dost recur to Him, by not having the confidence thou oughtest to have in His infinite goodness, thus doing a great injury to Our Lord and great damage to thyself. Always have a lively trust in the help of Almighty God, and in this way thou wilt be less apt to lose thy peace of mind in the midst of the storms that overtake thee, and thou wilt the more quickly obtain a return of the calm thou cravest. *Facta est tranquillitas magna—and there came a great calm.*

MONDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Memor esto, quoniam mors non tardat.—Eccl. xiv. 12.
Remember that death is not slow.

I. CONSIDER that the cause of the bad life which so many Christians lead, is commonly owing to the idea they entertain that death will not overtake them so

very soon ; something like those lazy servants who, under the impression that their master will not return home till late, neglect their household duties and give themselves up to every sort of excess. In the same way, when Christians imagine to themselves that their Lord is far away, they lead reckless lives, and put off their conversion from day to day. Oh, how important it is that thou shouldst bear in mind that death is not far off ! and in consequence settle thy accounts with God and begin anew. *Memor esto.*

II. Consider that there is no difficulty in remembering that death will overtake thee at some time or other ; but it is very difficult to realise that it will befall thee soon, because this thought is so very irksome ; and meanwhile thou succeedest in deceiving thyself in a thousand ways, until at length it overtakes thee when thou least expectest it. Therefore does the wise man say to thee, "*Memor esto, quoniam mors non tardat ;*" and if death tarries not, it is a sign that it is hastening on apace, and there is no one who can stop its onward course. It is not restricted to place, time, or manner, because it stalks along with kingly power and may overtake thee anywhere and at any time, with any sort of sickness, stroke, or unforeseen accident, without thy having the least suspicion of its approach. Now if nothing can possibly stay the hand of death, how canst thou flatter thyself that in thy own particular case it is still far from thee ? *Memor esto, quoniam mors non tardat—Remember that death is not slow.*

III. Consider that these truths are certainly well known, for who is there that is not aware that he is mortal ? Who is there that does not daily see or hear of many, both poor and rich, young and old, strong and weak, that are suddenly overtaken by death ? And yet for all that, and however great the need thou hast to bear death in mind, thou seekest to banish the

very thought of so distasteful a subject. Almighty God has stocked the whole of nature itself with images of death: *Implevit omnia morte*—Sap. xviii. 16—*He has filled all things with death*, so that its remembrance might be with thee whithersoever thou goest; with thee in the garden, where thou seest the flowers hardly burst into life before they droop, and where thou beholdest the trees which but such a short time before were clothed in all their pomp, quickly stripped of their flowers and leaves; with thee in the fields, where thou beholdest the yellow corn, awaiting from hour to hour the sweep of the sickle; present in the fountains, whose waters have hardly gurgled up, after their long race to reach the light of day, before they again bury themselves in their underground darkness; present in thy cell, when thou gazest on the candle that lights up thy book, and seest it dwindle down little by little, and flicker away under thy own eyes. Thou oughtest to avail thyself of all these images to keep thee in mind of death, and nourish in thy breast a lively memory that it is hastening along. Thus wilt thou bring thyself to live for that one thing which alone is of any consequence—eternity.

TUESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Diligere proximum, tamquam seipsum, majus est omnibus holocaustis et sacrificiis.—Marc. xii. 33.

To love one's neighbour as one's self, is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices.

I. CONSIDER that in these words Our Lord's intention is to make known to thee that every act of kindness

thou showest thy neighbour for the love of God, is an act of supernatural love, of greater value than even the acts of religion such as holocausts and sacrifices : because similar acts of supernatural virtue are calculated both to honour God, Who desires thee to exercise this virtue as though done towards Himself, and to help thy neighbour. If such be the case, how important it is, that whilst performing some act of charity on behalf of thy neighbour, thou shouldst raise thy heart to God, and do it for the love of God.

II. Consider that these acts of charity done to our neighbour, for love of God, are so pleasing to Him that very often such works, even though not performed from any supernatural motive, may have to be preferred to those of religion. Thus it is a duty to omit Mass on a holiday in order to attend to the wants of a sick person that stands in need of thy assistance, or even to set aside certain acts of self-sacrifice thou art perchance wont to offer to God by fastings or other penances, for the greater good of thy neighbour. Do then learn, once for all, to prize these acts of charity which hitherto thou hast esteemed so little. With all thy love for penance and mortification, thou art, perhaps, loth even to put thyself to any inconvenience to please thy neighbour, slow to pardon him for a sharp word, and ever ready to hurt his feelings in one way or another. Almighty God will never be pleased with thy lesser sacrifices, so long as thou slightest the greatest of all, which is the exercise of charity.

III. Consider that thy conduct towards thy neighbour has to be regulated according as it is a question in which thy temporal or spiritual interests are concerned. In matters of temporal interest, such as money, comfort, and the like, in which thy real good does not lie, sacrifice as much as thou art able for thy neighbour, for so thou wilt in reality be looking out for thyself ; whereas, when it is a question of thy spiritual interests

—such as divine grace, the virtues of humility, obedience, and the like, in which thy real good consists, thou hast not to yield one inch to thy neighbour ; on the contrary, thou must even cherish a holy jealousy about them, *œmulamini spiritualia*—1 Cor. xiv. 1—*be zealous for spiritual gifts*, because spiritual gifts are of such a nature that they may be held jointly by many, without prejudice to any one. But would to God that thou wert not as ready to sacrifice thy spiritual interests for thy neighbour as thou art ready to deny him any temporal kindness—to thy own twofold loss.

WEDNESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Quicumque ergo voluerit amicus esse sæculi hujus, inimicus Dei constituitur.—Jac. iv. 4.

Whosoever will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God.

I. CONSIDER that by the word *sæculum* is here meant all the temporal advantages that this world can offer within the space of an age. And although this *sæculum*, this world, can offer thee but temporal and fleeting goods,—for all that, it lays claim to thy allegiance, in spite of the rights Almighty God has to it, Who promises thee solid and eternal goods. Imagine that the world, on the one hand, and Almighty God, on the other, are vying with one another to win thee over to their respective sides. The world offers thee pleasures, honours, riches, but only for so long as thou mayest last it out in this life ; and as for the next, if thou fare ill, so much the worse for thee. God, on the other hand, offers thee goods of infinitely greater

value—not, it is true, in this fleeting world, but in eternity. It is for thee, therefore, to make up thy mind which of these two sides it is better worth thy while to join.

II. Consider that the greater part of mankind court the world, because, as they live like animals, they look to the present, and but little to the future. Do thou, on the contrary, think of the future rather than the present, and so thou wilt not go blindfolded along the road of the many—a crowded road, and in appearance enticing: *Via peccantium complanata lapidibus*—*The way of sinners is made plain with stones.* But what follows? *In fine illorum inferi et tenebræ et pænæ*—Eccl. xxi. 11—*In their end is hell and darkness and pains*: hell for the ambitious, darkness for the covetous, pains for the voluptuous. On the other hand, the path that leads to God keeps thee far from that of the world, in poverty, purity, and subjection; it is narrow, but *ducit ad vitam*—it leads thee to life eternal. Now is it not thy own interest to walk along the path of thy Saviour?

III. Consider that, according to the testimony of S. James, not all who are in this world are enemies of God, but all those who are friends of this world. By this He gives thee to understand, that just as it is possible to be in the world without loving it (which is seldom the case, on account of its difficulty), so also it is quite possible to be the world's friend after having turned one's back upon it. But what is meant by being another's friend? It means, having like maxims, like traits of mind, like ways of acting. Ah, how many are to be found in the cloister who, by aping the world, become friends of the world, and consequently enemies of God! If thou wishest not to fall into such a mournful condition, hold the maxims of the world in abomination, and detest its earthly, selfish, and fiendish wisdom, and beg thy Saviour to enable

thee to well understand and master that real wisdom which He Himself brought on earth.

THURSDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Sicut oves in inferno positæ sunt : mors depascet eos.—
Ps. xlviii. 15.

They are laid in hell like sheep : death shall feed upon them.

I. CONSIDER how great is the number of those who are damned : they go down into hell in crowds like a flock of sheep to the slaughter, because since the greater part of mankind live wickedly, it is but natural that they should also die in their sins. But perhaps the having so many companions will afford some consolation,—as is the vain hope of many a foolish worldling, when he says : If I go to hell I shall not be alone, at any rate ! Why, the very fact of being packed in that abyss, all huddled and crowded together like a flock of sheep, will only serve to increase their agony and rage, through not being able to put up with so overpowering a weight and such cramping straitness. This is the sort of consolation to be derived from numerous company in hell.

II. Consider what is the reason why so many are damned, as though they were brute beasts. The reason is because they allow themselves to be led *velut irrationabilia pecora*—2 Pet. ii. 12—*like irrational beasts*, by the evil customs of those around them, permitting themselves to be dragged by their companions into unlawful pastimes and debauchery—and that too with their eyes deliberately closed—even worse than beasts. Bad example does great harm to those also

who live community-life, for it leads them on to make little of the obligations of their vows, and of rules of even the greatest importance, from seeing them slighted by unobservant companions. But if the evil habits contracted by seculars cause the ruin of so many, thinkest thou that the bad customs that grow up in the cloister do not send many a religious as well to hell? Heed not, therefore, what the unobservant do, but if thou art desirous of saving thy soul, look solely to what ought to be done in conformity with the claims of thy rule and of thy own conscience.

III. Consider how death will prey on those who, like brute beasts, get cast into hell—*mors depascet eos*—*Death shall feed upon them*: because this monster death, as though it found in them its favourite prey, will slowly devour them, without ever consuming them. By death is understood every sort of punishment capable of causing death, unless one may perhaps prefer to understand by death the devil, who is called death because he is the origin of death, just as Christ is called Life because He is the author of life. The devil, then, will be this untiring monster that will never cease feeding and gorging his cruelty on that immense crowd of victims by torturing them with every sort of most frightful torments: for as they have lived like brute beasts, and followed the beck of their evil habits in life, they will find themselves driven on to hell like a flock of sheep to the slaughter. Wilt thou, therefore, expose thyself to so great a danger of damnation by either shrinking from thy duty of overcoming some mean human respect, and of withdrawing thyself from the influence of the bad example of others?

FRIDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia ejus.—1 Pet. ii. 21.

Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.

I. CONSIDER that one of the principal ends which Christ Our Lord had in coming into this world, was to guide us and encourage us by His own most holy example to tread the path of Calvary. Hence the Apostle S. Peter in this passage would have us bear this end alone in mind, because it is for us the most necessary to keep before our eyes. For, although we are already redeemed by the sufferings of Christ and His death on the Cross, and are, moreover, enlightened by the teaching of His Gospel, yet we shall not, for all that, save our souls unless we make up our minds in real earnest to follow Him in the path which He trod—the path of suffering. Thou must not, therefore, place thyself at the feet of Jesus, simply and solely to gaze upon His divine countenance and compassionate His sufferings, but principally to follow after Him in His footsteps and imitate His example: *Vobis relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia ejus—Leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.*

II. Consider that thou hast no reason to be affrighted at hearing that thou art strictly bound to take Christ for thy model, Who underwent so great sufferings, because He was left to thee as a model, not indeed to be equalled, but only to be followed—*ut sequamini*. But how canst thou affirm that thou art following Him if thou art continually pursuing quite a contrary path? Thou excusest thyself on the plea of not having strength

enough to walk in a path of suffering equal to that of Christ: but thou canst never find any excuse, on the plea of not being able to co-operate with those helps which the grace of God is continually ministering to thee for this purpose; the more so, that oftentimes thou ceasest to follow Him altogether and deliberately turnest thy back upon Him, by seeking with all the means in thy power thy own comfort, thy own whims, and thy own advantage. It is not, therefore, thy want of strength that hinders thee from following Jesus to Calvary, but thy own want of goodwill. If thou canst not suffer so much as Christ, be resolved at least to suffer with Christ.

III. Consider that there are many who go by the road of suffering, and who for all that are not followers of Christ, because they suffer their ailings or disgraces or misfortunes through sheer necessity. Hence, in order to follow after Christ, it is not enough simply to go by the path of suffering that Christ went, but it is needful that thou shouldst tread in His footsteps, and that thou shouldst go along it as did thy Saviour—that is to say, thou must suffer with that resignation of will, with that peace of mind, and with that perseverance of which Christ gives us the example. This is following in His footsteps: *Vestigia ejus secutus est pes meus*—Job xxiii. 11—*My foot has followed His steps*. If thou wouldst encourage thyself to do this, say often within thyself: *Christus passus est pro nobis*—*Christ has suffered for us*—a God for man, the Creator for His creature. Why, then, shall not I suffer for Him in return—and suffer with cheerfulness?

SATURDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Initium sapientiæ timor Domini.—Ps. cx. 10.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

I. CONSIDER that the fear of God is here called the beginning of wisdom, because as in the art of building the beginning and starting of the works consists in the labour of excavating and digging the foundations on which the building is to be raised, so also is the fear of God that first process, by means of which Divine Wisdom begins to work in the heart of the just the foundation of the whole spiritual edifice. But this fear is not that which is called servile, and which begets the dread of punishment and not of guilt; it is filial fear which, through the knowledge the just man has of Almighty God's claims to the highest esteem and greatest love, causes him to submit, as a respectful son does to his father for fear of displeasing him. Wouldst thou know whether Divine Wisdom has laid the foundations of a spiritual life in thy heart? See what kind of fear is uppermost there—that of a child or that of a slave?

II. Consider that filial fear is the foundation—but a life-giving foundation, like the roots of a tree that not only support it, but feed and enrich it: *Radix sapientiæ est timere Dominum*—Eccl. i. 25—*The root of wisdom is to fear the Lord.* Hence, as a tree is indebted to its roots for all its branches and blossom, leaves and fruit, because without its roots all would wither, so also all the good works performed by a just man are owing to the fear of God: *Qui timet Dominum faciet bona*—Eccl. xv. 1—*He that feareth God will do good,* because this holy fear gives them nerve and energy as the root does to the tree. See, then, of

what great importance it is to keep this fear of God alive and vigorous. The health and strength of a root depend on its being deeply struck and generously fed.

III. Consider that thou canst not know for certain whether or not thou possessest this holy fear of God, this source of all good, because it is hidden like the buried root, and Almighty God, for thy own good, does not choose to certify thee of its possession in order that thou mayest the more easily preserve it by a continual anxiety as to whether thou hast it or not. The more a root is covered over with earth the stronger it becomes, and so it is with the fear of God : *Beatus homo qui semper est pavidus*—Prov. xxviii. 14—*Blessed is the man that is always fearful*. True it is that a constant production of the fruit which is peculiar to any tree gives a moral certainty that the root is alive : and so also with thee, if thou keepest aloof from evil when occasions of sin present themselves, in order to avoid the offence of God ; and if thou performest good works in order to please Him, thou mayest hold it as morally certain that the root of the fear of God is alive within thee. Whereas, if thou abstainest from evil merely from human respect, and performest thy good works with a view to further thy own interests or to gain esteem, or from other like unworthy motives, thou canst not have any certainty of possessing this holy fear of God. Bear in mind, too, that thou wouldst not be the first religious who, through having lost this fear, has most sadly been damned for ever.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Nonne bonum semen seminasti in agro tuo ? Unde ergo habet zizania ?—Matth. xiii. 27.

Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field ? whence then hath it cockle ?

I. CONSIDER what abundant seed God has sown in thy heart up to the present moment : by means of His interior lights and pious thoughts, His secret invitations and inspirations to good, in the first instance in calling thee from the world, and ever since during the whole period of thy life in religion. So abundant have His graces been, that they would have been more than enough to have made a great saint of any one else. Then, in the next place, look and see what fruit this so abundant and choice seed has brought forth in thee, in the shape of good works ? Oh, how much good thou hast left undone, which Almighty God demanded of thee by particular impulses of grace ! how many deeds of piety hast thou not neglected which were enjoined thee by thy rule ! What a crowd of failings ! What a number of sins hast thou not committed with full deliberation ! Examine attentively the life thou hast led up to the present moment, and confront it with the gifts of grace thou hast received in such profusion from the hand of God, and thou wilt find abundant matter for thy own confusion.

II. Consider what has been the cause of this ill correspondence on thy part, and its consequent production of this cockle of vices instead of the wheat of virtues. *Unde habes zizania ?* The cause is twofold : thy negligence in falling asleep, and the ill-will of thy enemies. When a person is asleep he keeps his eyes closed, thus attending only to the repose of his body, and not to the increase of his mental faculties. Thou

also art asleep because thou keepest thy eyes closed to all that concerns the affairs of thy soul, and heedest not the workings of grace, intent only on satisfying and contenting thy body. This, then, is the first reason. The second reason is the malice of thy hellish foes, who, seeing thy exceeding negligence, are continually scattering the cockle of bad thoughts in thy mind, together with useless ideas and suggestions, and ill-regulated desires, which can germinate nothing else but vice. Be therefore watchful over thyself if thou wouldst keep out thy enemies—enemies who never sleep.

III. Consider that good seed is not so easily distinguished, at first sight, from bad seed, as neither is corn from cockle. But the difference is plain enough when harvest-time is come. So also in religious communities, where the perfect and the imperfect live together, and virtues and defects go hand in hand, it is not such an easy matter to distinguish one from the other; nay, what is still more strange, vice and virtue are at times sadly mistaken by one and the same individual: rancour is looked upon as zeal, sloth is considered modesty, and so on of the rest. But what a wide difference will be recognised when at the time of reaping the divine husbandman will give orders for the corn to be separated from the cockle, vice from virtue, the reprobate from the elect: *Colligite zizania ad comburendum, triticum autem congregare in horreum meum*—Matth. xiii. 20—*Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.* Oh, what a separation will this be! The reprobate hurried off to eternal flames, the blessed invited to the joys of Paradise! Bear in mind that thou also wilt be subjected to this ordeal at the hour of death. Think over this truth seriously and frequently.

MONDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Ecce venio cito, tene quod habes : ut nemo accipiat coronam tuam.—Apoc. iii. 11.

Behold I come quickly : hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

I. CONSIDER that that which disheartens thee from persevering in the good thou hast undertaken is the idea that thou hast a long life to live. Wherefore, in order to encourage thyself, imagine that every day is to be the last of thy life. Dost thou not hear what Our Lord says to thee : *Ecce venio cito*--*Behold I come quickly* ? He does not say : *Veniam*—*I will come*, but *Venio*—*I am coming*, because He is rapidly drawing near, and already *prope est in januis*—Matth. xxiv. 23—*He is nigh even at the doors*. A like warning is whispered in thy ear by means of those ailings that creep upon thee, by that loss of sight and hearing, by those grey hairs that begin to show themselves. When the Apostle makes mention of the judgment trumpet, he styles it the last trumpet—in *novissima tuba*, because many others have sounded before it. When, therefore, thou hearest that such a one has fallen down dead, that another has perished by the sword, and that another has met with his death from apoplexy or some unforeseen accident—all these are so many trumpets of warning for thee : and how many hast thou not already heard ! The only misfortune is that thou wilt not be persuaded that they are meant for thee.

II. Consider that since Our Lord is actually coming, it is a bounden duty to be determined to persevere at all costs, for it is a question of too great moment to be slighted. Whatever wouldst thou afterwards think

if that beauteous crown, which is now awaiting thee on the one condition of thy persevering to the end, by fidelity in keeping alive the same earnest desire to serve Almighty God, the same exactness in thy spiritual exercises, in regular observance and in obedience as when thou beganst thy religious career—what, I say, wouldst thou think if this crown should be snatched away from thee and placed on another's brow? The grace of Almighty God, which thou needest to effect this, is always ready to be bestowed on thee, whenever thou askest for it in earnest.

III. Consider that thy welfare alone, and not any interest of Almighty God's, is at stake by thy persevering in thy endeavours to win a crown of glory: if He damns thee He will not lack others to serve Him, and as many as He wishes. *Conteret multos*—He will trample under foot many much better than thou, *et innumerabiles*—and a crowd of such as thou, *et stare faciet alios pro te*—Job xxxiv. 24—and will raise up others in thy stead. It is true that Almighty God holds a crown in readiness for thee, nor can any one snatch it from thee by main force. On this very account has He chosen thee, and shown thee a special love, and afforded thee every help to be able to win it in preference to thousands of souls left unnoticed in the wilds of Africa: but if He should find that thou art ungrateful He will forsake thee, and will find somewhere in Peru or Chili an heir to the crown first offered to thee, and so shamefully slighted by thee.

TUESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Si enim secundum carnem vixeritis moriemini: si autem spiritu facta carnis mortificaveritis, vivetis.—Rom. iii. 13.

For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.

I. CONSIDER how awful is the punishment with which Almighty God threatens those who are bent on living according to the flesh—that is, who gratify their flesh in everything, and daily indulge the flesh in all it craves for. On the other hand, consider the sublime reward which is held out to those who make up their minds to mortify their flesh and its unruly desires, and then choose which of the two thou wilt do: either tread the path which leads to life, or go by that which leads to death. Think the matter over well: for it is more difficult to turn back when half the journey is over than not to set foot at all on the slippery road to perdition.

II. Consider that this death with which those are threatened who live according to the flesh, implies several distinct deaths. The first is the death of guilt, because this is the first that is incurred. The second is natural death, which took its origin from sin in the first instance, and 'even now is hastened by sin. The third is the death of damnation, and these three different deaths not unfrequently overtake their victim together—when, namely, at one and the same moment, a person sins, dies, and falls headlong into hell. Oh, what a horrible sort of death is this! Consider, on the other hand, the life which is promised to those who mortify the flesh—a threefold life. The first is natural life, because they live to a greater age: *Qui*

abstinens est adjiciet vitum—Eccl. xxxvii. 34—*He that is temperate shall prolong life.* The second is the life of grace, because it is mortification that obtains grace for us and maintains it. The third is the life of glory, because mortification enhances it in the next world, and gives us a foretaste of it in this by means of the interior consolation it brings with it. See now whether after all to mortify oneself be not really to love oneself, and to satisfy the cravings of nature be not in reality to hate oneself.

III. Consider that a purely spiritual life is not to be found on this earth, but only in heaven. Wherefore it is thy task to check and bridle the insolence of the flesh by compelling it to bend to the sway of the spirit, since the only aim of the flesh is to rebel against its lawful master with its lawless appetites and motions. Now there are three sorts of life : life that is purely angelical and according to the spirit, to which thou canst not hope to attain ; life that is wholly animal and according to the flesh, which thou must avoid ; and, thirdly, the life of a mortified man, which is a medium between the life of angels and that of brute beasts, and this thou hast to embrace. When the mortification peculiar to this third sort of life is practised in an ordinary degree, it makes a man a rational being and a Christian ; when it is practised in a more lofty degree, it makes him a spiritual man and a real religious, enabling him to say, like the Apostle : *Semper mortificationem Jesu in corpore nostro circumferentes*—2 Cor. iv. 10—*always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus.* Such is the life to which thou hast to aspire.

WEDNESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Omne quodcunque facitis in verbo aut in opere omnia in nomine Domini Jesu Christi facite, gratias agentes Deo et Patri per ipsum.—Col. iii. 17.

All whatsoever you do, in word or in works, all things do ye in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

I. CONSIDER how, in all thou doest, whether good in itself or simply indifferent, thou oughtest to direct everything to the honour of Jesus. Thou hast to strive to do this, not only habitually, so as to have Him alone as the ultimate end of thy actions, which is of obligation, but also actually, which is of counsel only, because in this way thou wilt enrich thyself with great merit. How much of thy labour avails thee nothing, because thou endurest it only for thy own convenience? No—offer all thy labours to Jesus, so that thus thy study and conversation, thy eating and sleeping, thy lawful recreations, and everything else may be directed to His honour. If thou performest thy actions to please thyself, thou accustomest thyself to pamper self-love, to thy own great injury and immense loss; whereas if thou offerest all the fruit of thy good works to Almighty God, thou wilt be, as it were, a fruitful and acceptable tree in His sight, and thou wilt be able to say, *Omnia poma nova et vetera servavi tibi*—Cant. vii. 13—*The new and the old I have kept for Thee.* I have kept for Thee all my fruit, both new and old: that is to say, all my actions, both *nova*—of grace—and *vetera*—of nature.

II. Consider that although it is enough to offer to Almighty God all thy actions in the morning, it is

better to continue throughout the day directing them to Him as they occur, because it is very easy that thy original intention should be made to swerve, or be altogether destroyed by self-love. Hence thou must renew thy intention as often as thou canst, which practice will become very easy by custom. Thus thou wilt do *omne*, everything in general, and, moreover, *omnia*, each single action in particular, to the honour of Christ: *in nomine Domini*—*in the Name of the Lord*; not merely *ad nomen*, like one that acts habitually, but moreover, *in nomine*, like one that performs what he is about with an actual intention.

III. Consider that, as thou oughtest to make an offering of everything thou dost to Almighty God, so also oughtest thou to give Him thanks for everything; since that very offering thou makest is entirely the fruit of His own gift. Thou hast to resemble a river which, according to the idea of the ancients, gives back to the ocean those very waters which it has derived thence, as from its original source. This thanksgiving thou owest in a peculiar manner to God the Father, original source of every good gift we receive, and as He has from us everything through Christ, so also He wishes that we should render Him thanks through Christ. Oh, how much those are to be pitied who spend their lives like thankless animals, which whilst occupied in feeding on the acorns scattered beneath the oak boughs, never once cast a glance upwards to look to Whom they are indebted.

THURSDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Qui converti fecerit peccatorem ab errore viæ suæ, salvabit animam ejus a morte, et operiet multitudinem peccatorum.—Jac. v. 20.

He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

I. CONSIDER that as thou, by reason of thy religious state, treadest the sure path of salvation, so also is it thy duty, as far as in thee lies, to withdraw thy neighbour from the dangerous path of sin, and to strive by every means within thy reach to rescue the soul of thy neighbour from the death of sin. See what becomes of the body as soon as the soul has fled; and remember that the soul is reduced to a still worse state as soon as it loses its God. Besides, a corpse knows not its own misfortune, but the soul which has lost God, even though it should not recognise its misery at once, will know it but too well afterwards. Now if thou savest the soul of thy neighbour from such a death, thou wilt become a saviour like to Jesus Christ; and is not this a most honourable title?

II. Consider that Almighty God has decreed a special reward for the charity of such as seek to withdraw a sinner from his wandering path, because *operiet multitudinem peccatorum—he shall cover a multitude of sins.* And is not this a very great reward? In return for the good thou doest thy neighbour by rescuing his soul from spiritual death, Almighty God will forgive thee the debt of punishment due to thy past sins, and, moreover, the guilt of thy present sins; for if they are venial, they will be straightway effaced by that act

of charity, and if they be mortal, He will give thee the aid of His grace to repent and detest them, at the same time bestowing upon thee efficacious grace to keep thee safe in time of temptation, and to remain steadfast in time of trial; and, moreover, by visiting thee with marks of more special love in time of prayer. This will be thy reward if thou dost thy best, whether by word of mouth, or still more by prayer and good example, to rescue those who are in danger, or those who have fallen.

III. Consider that thou perchance wouldst fain excuse thyself from practising this so great work of charity, because thou art neither a preacher nor a missionary. But if thou art not in a position to teach or preach, surely thou canst at any rate help thy neighbour by telling him of his failings and correcting them, by proffering advice as circumstances permit, and by giving good example! What prevents thee from rendering efficacious assistance, by perseveringly praying to Almighty God for the conversion of sinners? Those who have to treat of the conversion of sinners with sinners themselves, often labour in vain, but they who deal with Almighty God in this matter in a proper way, are sure of success. What excuse, therefore, canst thou find for not praying Almighty God to open the eyes of sinners in time, and bring them to repentance? *Orate pro invicem, ut salvemini, multum enim valet deprecatio justi assidua*—Jac. v. 16—*Pray one for another, that ye may be saved, for the continual prayer of a just man availeth much.*]

FRIDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Pro justitia agonizare pro anima tua, et usque ad mortem certa pro justitia : et Deus expugnabit pro te inimicos tuos.—Eccl. iv. 33.

Strive for justice for thy soul, and even unto death fight for justice : and God will overthrow thy enemies for thee.

I. CONSIDER that by justice is here understood the grace of God which alone makes a man just, since without it man is in a more lamentable condition than a brute beast, and does not deserve even the name of man. Now rather than lose the grace of God, thou must be ready to endure anything, even, if needs be, the agonies of death ; so that thou must put up with any separation or detachment from thy friends or thyself, however painful it may prove, rather than suffer the loss of this : nay, it is thy bounden duty to allow thyself to be deprived of life itself rather than be prevailed upon to part with the grace of God, which is the life of thy soul and life eternal : *Gratia Dei vita æterna—Rom. vi. 23—The grace of God is life everlasting.* The death which thou must face in order to preserve grace is twofold—one real, the other metaphorical. Those endure a real death who allow themselves to be butchered and burnt rather than yield their consent to a transgression of the law of God : but thou art called upon only to live in readiness to die such a death if needful. Those die a metaphorical death who, by reason of the entire denial of themselves which they practise, are able to say with the Apostle : *Quotidie morior—1 Cor. xv. 31—I die daily ;* and to this death thou must submit thyself, according as thy state as a religious demands of thee, if thou wishest to preserve the grace of God.

II. Consider that the inferior part, thy animal nature, is most obstinately set against enduring not only real death, but even the metaphorical death of self-denial. Hence it is that thou art told in the text above quoted to fight for justice—*certa pro justitia*. How many there are in time of war who go and face the fire of musketry, one to please his prince, another from motives of ambition, and another for lucre-sake ! Therefore thou oughtest with much greater reason to fight with thy superior part—thy rational soul—against the inferior part, and do for Almighty God what so many fear not to undertake for the world. *Certa pro justitia*—fight—not only in defence of the grace thou possessest, but to increase it as well ; since every additional degree of grace is well worth the enduring the most cruel of deaths. And even though thou shouldst bring on premature death by thy fervour in the pursuit of perfection—oh, how much better it would be for thee to lose ten years of life and gain ten degrees of grace ! If thou shouldst shorten thy life, either in the cause of regular observance or in the work of saving souls on missions, happy art thou, for thou wilt win a crown in heaven, the beauty of which will far surpass any that the world could bestow upon thee.

III. Consider that thou perchance wouldst fain withdraw thyself from so arduous a campaign from the knowledge of thy own weakness. But hearken to what the Wise Man subjoins : *Deus expugnabit pro te inimicos tuos*—*God will overthrow thy enemies for thee*. It is thy business to fight, and if thou dost this, Almighty God undertakes to conquer for thee. Of thyself thou canst do simply nothing ; but if thou art not remiss in availing thyself of those aids which Almighty God continues all the day long to dole out to thee, in order to overcome thy unruly appetites, the love of thy own comfort, undue attachment to

honour and to thy own acquaintance, He will give thee strength to fight right well, and at one and the same time will crown thee with victory. All will be right if only thou grow not weary of co-operating with divine grace, and do not cast down thy arms; because it is then, and then only, that thy enemies will gain a most shameful victory over thee. Be therefore steadfast and faithful in fighting manfully until the hour of thy death, *et Deus expugnabit pro te inimicos tuos*—and God will overthrow thy enemies.

SATURDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Meus cibus est, ut faciam voluntatem ejus qui misit me.
—Joan. iv. 34.

My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me.

I. CONSIDER that Christ called doing the Will of His Father His food, and neither His labours, His journeys, His preaching, nor His sufferings for man's salvation, did He dignify with this name, although all these things were in reality the substance of His Father's Will. This He did to teach thee that what most of all nourishes and causes the growth of holiness is not the mere performance of the actions or employments enjoined thee by obedience, but the having for thy aim in their acquittal a perfect compliance with the Will of thy heavenly Father. So that in whatever grade, in whatever place, in whatever occupation, more or less laborious, thou must always think of and look to the accomplishment of God's Will alone—because this is thy true food.

II. Consider that the fulfilment of God's holy Will

is food to the soul, because as food maintains the life of the body, so also the discharging of thy duties in this way fosters grace, which is the life of thy soul. Besides, there is this advantage in thy favour, that whereas material food cannot keep death away for any length of time from thy body, the constant performance of the Will of God will confer on thy soul a life which will never fail for all eternity. *Operamini cibum, qui non perit, sed qui permanet in vitam æternam*—Joan. vi. 27—*Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting.* If in the daily employments obedience demands of thee thou hast any other aim than the fulfilment of God's holy Will, they will not haply prove to be solid food for thy spiritual life, but unsound and worm-eaten by unworthy views—by crooked and earthly designs: whereas if in thy every undertaking thou lookest to the Will of God alone, thy works will invariably prove to be food of life, and of life everlasting—*Vivet anima vestra*—Isa. lv. 3—*Your soul shall live.*

III. Consider that material food not only maintains and supports the life of the body, but it also invigorates it and causes it to grow, because it gives it strength and refreshes it: when weary it adds fresh vigour, and it brings it to its proper growth. In the same way does this immaterial food act on the soul: it makes it grow little by little, and progress from the first rudiments of holiness to a more advanced standard, and thence again to a state of perfection. It moreover invigorates and braces it to good: for what can possibly be more likely to make a religious light-hearted and happy, in whatever employment or in whatever grade he may be placed by obedience, than the certain knowledge that he is doing the Will of Almighty God, and the peaceful assurance that he cannot possibly be occupied in anything more holy than by fulfilling the Will of his heavenly Father? This it is, that

gives courage and strength to a religious in everything he does and wherever he is, for he is able to say like Jesus Christ : *Quæ placita sunt ei facio semper*—Joan. viii. 29—*I do always the things that please Him.* Do thou, therefore, resolve seriously to accomplish the Will of thy heavenly Father, and in this way every employment, every place, and every action will become sweet and pleasant to thee.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Simile est regnum cœlorum grano sinapis.—Matth. xiii. 31.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed.

I. CONSIDER that, according to the Fathers of the Church, the parable of the mustard-seed has many meanings, but they take it to mean principally the teaching and the truths of the Gospel which Jesus came to sow in the hearts of men, and which, although looked upon with scorn by the wise ones of this world, by reason of their appearing lowly and commonplace, nevertheless have since grown to such an extent, and have been so widely spread throughout the length and breadth of the world, that they have cast discredit on worldly wisdom, and induced numbers of souls to lead a heavenly life. Wouldst thou know the secret why until now thou hast been so far from the practice of religious perfection ? The reason is, because the truths and principles of the Gospel have not taken deep root in thy heart ; thou art ever with thy mind turned to what is of no importance, and for this seldom givest thy thoughts to what alone is of any consequence ; thou thinkest of the present, and little or nothing of the

future ; in thy conduct thou art actuated by a so-called common sense and by worldly maxims, and not by the light of faith and the teaching of Christ.

II. Consider that if thou wishest to plant the maxims of the Gospel in thy heart, and let them take root there, it is absolutely necessary for thee to clear away that profusion of worldly thoughts and earthly affections which are as brambles that prevent them from taking root or growing. Moreover, it is absolutely necessary that thou shouldst make it thy serious duty frequently to ponder the more important and leading principles of the Gospel, remembering that they are all the very teaching of Jesus Christ—the uncreated Wisdom, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Set thyself to reflect calmly on these words : *Quid prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur ?*—Matth. xvi. 26—*What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul ?*—or on other truths of a like nature—and thou wilt see what immense spiritual advantage thou wilt derive therefrom.

III. Consider that the consequence of these truths being deeply rooted in thy heart, will be the complete detachment of thy affections from the paltry trash of earth and the deceitful goods of this world, and the raising up of thy desires to the things of heaven ; so much so, that if up to this present time thou hast been crawling on the earth like a worm, thou wilt thenceforward soar on high like the eagle, draw as nigh as thou canst in desire to the sun of Divine Justice, and fix thy gaze on His beauty ; this is the meaning of those words of the Gospel : *Ita ut volucres cæli veniant et habitent in ramis ejus*—so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.

MONDAY IN THE SIXTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Time-te eum, qui postquam occiderit, habet potestatem mittere in Gehennam : ita dico vobis, hunc time-te.—Luc. xii. 5.

! Fear ye Him, Who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear Him.

I. CONSIDER what a strange thing it is that thou shouldst fear God so little. Suppose that some one were holding thee by the hair of thy head over the parapet of a lofty tower, so that by merely opening his hand thou wouldst fall headlong into a pit infested by scorpions and savage beasts, that with open jaws were only awaiting thy fall to devour thee, pray, wouldst thou dare, at so critical a moment, to insult and irritate him who held thee ? Why, then, art thou less afraid of exciting the wrath of thy God by thy carelessness, when by simply withdrawing His hand from over thee, He can let thee fall into a still more frightful and horrid pit—*mittere in Gehennam*—and cast thee into hell ? Thou wouldst not, surely, be of the number of those who *aulacter provocant Deum*—*provoke God boldly*.

II. Consider that *Gehenna* means here a deep abyss in the midst of the earth, where every pain and torture is to be found as in its own centre, and consequently in the sharpest degree, and hence it is called *puteus abyssi*—*the depth of the abyss* : an abyss which is like an immense cesspool into which runs all the filth of the world, and where after the day of judgment will be cast all the bodies of the damned, packed close one on the top of the other, and all heaped together like a pile of victims to be burnt for ever as

a sacrifice to the wrath of God. Oh, what an agony will it not be for those poor wretches, to be immovably pinned down for never-ending ages, groaning beneath the overwhelming burden of so crushing a weight ! And yet haply thou at this very moment hangest in the hand of God over this yawning abyss, into which He can let thee fall any minute ; and thou hast so little fear and thinkest so little of begging for mercy ! How many religious, after having excited the anger of Almighty God by their ingratitude, have been suffered by Him first of all to fall into grievous sin, and have then been hurled headlong into this frightful abyss ! *Postquam occiderit, misit in Gehennam.* Think often on this if thou wouldst entertain a wholesome fear.

III. Consider that Our Lord frequently inculcates the fear of this abyss, because thou standest in great need of this fear to put thee on thy guard against giving Him any occasion of abandoning thee. But remark that thy fear may be of two kinds. Thou mayest fear the guilt of sin on account of its punishment, or thou mayest fear the punishment on account of the sin as well. If thou darest sin on account of its punishment, thou doest well ; but this is a servile fear, and certainly not heroic. If thou wishest to conceive a filial fear, thou must dread the punishment of hell on account of the guilt of sin, which necessarily accompanies it. This is that holy fear which will grow in thee in the same proportion as the love of God reigns sovereign in thy heart.

TUESDAY IN THE SIXTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus, ut videant opera vestra bona, et glorificent Patrem vestrum.—Matth. v. 16.

So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father.

I. CONSIDER that this admonition is given to all the faithful, because by the fact of their being children of light—*filii lucis*—they all lie under the obligation of behaving themselves in such a manner as to give good example to their neighbour, and a motive for praising God; *Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus*, says the Apostle—Phil. iv. 5—*Let your modesty be known to all men.* Anyhow, this admonition is more especially directed to religious who, by reason of their being the especially beloved children of God—*vocati in admirabile lumen suum*—1 Pet. ii. 9—*called unto His marvellous light*—ought to try their utmost to promote the glory of their heavenly Father. What endeavours dost thou make to give good example inside the monastery to thy brethren—and, outside, to seculars? It is not enough to be good; thou must show it also, and shine as a light to those around thee in thy every action, in thy behaviour, and in thy conversation, so that everyone that comes across thee may be impelled to praise their heavenly Father.

II. Consider that in proportion as thy obligation as a religious, of giving good example to all, is great, so much the more art thou strictly bound never to give any scandal or bad example which might prove injurious to thy neighbour, or give offence to Almighty

God. Art thou not, perhaps, aware what force the bad example of a religious has, when he does in the presence of seculars what is evidently in discordance with what he professes? They will be emboldened to do what is at variance with what they profess, even as Christians. Dost thou reflect on this often enough?

III. Consider that thou oughtest to give edification and good example, not indeed from any motive of vain-glory, but simply for the glory of God—*ut glorificent Patrem vestrum*. What end dost thou propose to thyself in thy actions? Dost thou do good in order to make a display of it, or to give glory to God? It is, indeed, the Will of thy Saviour that thy good works should be seen, but not that thou shouldst do them to procure thy own praises. He wishes them to be seen, so as to give an opportunity to others of praising God, Who is the author of all good works.

WEDNESDAY IN THE SIXTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Nolite timere opprobrium hominum, et blasphemias eorum ne timeatis; sicut enim vestimentum, comedet eos vermis, et sicut lanam devorabit eos tinea; salus autem mea in sempiternum erit.—Isa. li. 7, 8.

Fear ye not the reproach of men, and be not afraid of their blasphemies: for the worm shall eat them up as a garment, and the moth shall consume them as wool; but My salvation shall be for ever and ever.

I. CONSIDER what great damage is generally inflicted on the vigour of the spiritual and religious life by the dread of incurring the scorn of men of the world who make it a rule to revile whosoever wishes to lead a

godly life, and to practise the pious exercises which his state of life demands of him—at one time by slights, at others by cutting remarks and unkind words. For this very reason Our Lord gives thee in this text a timely warning not to give heed to what people say ; for, after all, the scorn that may fall to thy lot is but the scorn of men who before long will be rotting in their graves, and the reward He will afterwards bestow on thee in heaven in recompense for such like hardships, will last for ever. Now if all these annoyances, however galling, are soon to come to an end, and the advantage that accrues to thee from them will never have an end, oughtest thou not to make little of an evil in itself bearable, and from which no real harm can befall thee ?

II. Consider that, after all, the grievance in question is simply one of opinion, because it consists in the low esteem which men appear to entertain of thee ; but if thou desirest an efficacious remedy against this dread of other people's opinion, enter into thyself and ponder who these men are from whose disesteem thou shrinkest. They are men whose judgment is liable to gross error, is unfair and changeable, who very shortly will moulder away into dust, and be devoured by worms, as wool is by moths. But if thou wouldst bring thyself to pay no heed to them at all, let this reflection sink deeply into thy mind, by imagining them not only in the grave, but even in hell—since no one is more certain to go there than he who neither does good himself nor would have others do it either—and hearken how, full of envy towards those very individuals whom before they held in contempt, they cry out : *Hi sunt quos habuimus aliquando in derisum*—Sap. v. 3—*these are they whom we had some time in derision*. What, then, does it matter if the wicked insult thee now, when they will have to envy thee for never-ending ages ?

III. Consider that Our Lord makes a most timely mention of the benefit thou wilt derive from the taunts of the wicked, if patiently endured : it is that they will detach thee from the love of creatures to which thou wouldst have been attached if they were to praise thee for the good thou performest, whereas now they will gain for thee the love of thy Creator, if in His service thou meetest with nothing but scorn. If His service were the occasion of thy being honoured by others, thou wouldst remain under an obligation to Him for serving Him ; but if, on the contrary, it is the cause of thy being looked down upon, it is He that is put under an obligation to thee. See, then, how fortunate thou art, if, when seeking to serve thy God, thou receivest only injuries—for thus it is that He becomes entirely thine : *Si exprobamini in nomine Christi beati eritis*—1 Pet. iv. 14—*If you be reproached for the Name of Christ, you shall be blessed.*

THURSDAY IN THE SIXTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Filios enutrevi, et exaltavi : ipsi autem spreverunt me.
—Isa. i. 2.

I have brought up children and exalted them ; but they have despised Me.

I. CONSIDER that the children of one and the same father may be considered in three different conditions, according as they are either bondsmen, or freedmen, or heirs. Only the blessed, who have already taken possession of their patrimony in heaven, can be called heirs. Freedmen are religious who have been withdrawn from the thralldom of the world ; and finally, by

bondsmen are understood seculars, who are obliged to subject themselves to the ways and customs of the world. But the bitter reproach contained in these words of Isaias is more peculiarly intended for religious who are treated as freedmen, and who, in an especial manner, enjoy the privileged name of children of God. Do thou consider, therefore, seriously, on the one hand, the treatment thou hast met with on the part of Almighty God, Who has been a Father to thee, and, on the other hand, reflect on the conduct thou hast shown towards Him in return—conduct, alas ! hitherto worthy only of an ungrateful child. Change thy conduct in future, and give Him no longer any grounds for complaint.

II. Consider the loving way in which Almighty God has treated thee. He has nourished thee with the abundance of His gifts of grace, calling thee, by means of so many interior lights and inspirations, from the world to religion ; here He has provided thee with so many helps, and so many incentives to devotion by means of thy rules, by the example of thy brethren, and by the frequenting of the sacraments, in order to enable thee to live like a true child of His. He has raised thee above the level of other men by likening thee, in an especial manner, to His only-begotten Son Jesus, and making Him in a certain sense thy help-mate, with a view to rendering thee more like to Him in glory, and a more intimate companion in His kingdom : *In hoc vocati estis ut benedictionem hæreditatis possideatis*—1 Pet. iii. 9—*For unto this are you called, that you may inherit a blessing.* If such be the case, methinks Almighty God may well say to thee, *Filios enutrevi et exaltavi*, after having, like a fond Father, afforded thee such sumptuous living and given thee so lordly a position. What more could He have done ?

III. Consider the return thou hast hitherto made

Almighty God for so much love ! Thou hast given no heed to His loving calls, but hast turned Him to scorn by disobeying His laws and refusing Him the homage which is His due. *Filios enutrivit et exaltavit : ipsi autem spreverunt me.* Whenever Almighty God is offended by seculars, He is displeased, it is true—but not in so revolting a way as when He is offended by a loved child, as every religious is ; because seculars generally sin from ignorance or inadvertence, distracted as they are and taken up by the cares of the world. But a religious who is an inmate of God's own house, and who ought to have nothing so much at heart as to pay Him the tribute of obedience and homage he owes Him—oh, how much more is the affront he offers Almighty God aggravated ! Hence it is that every sin a religious commits is, under like circumstances, much more heinous than the same sin when committed by a secular ; and therefore it is not to be wondered at if Almighty God should show greater mercy towards seculars, who have perpetrated even the most heinous crimes, than towards religious, guilty of transgressions which are lesser in themselves, by allowing the latter to come to a miserable end, and so fall into the bottomless abyss.

FRIDAY IN THE SIXTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Jesus ut sanctificaret per suum sanguinem populum, extra portam passus est. Exeamus igitur ad eum extra castra, improperium ejus portantes.—Hebr. xiii. 12, 13.

Jesus, that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.

I. CONSIDER that Christ died outside Jerusalem, on an open hill, to show that He died for the good of the whole human race, and under the eyes of all, for His own greater confusion. Gaze, therefore, on thy Jesus as He goes forth from the gate of the city, which was called *Stercoraria*, on account of its uncleanness, between two thieves, with a heavy gibbet on His shoulders, and accompanied by the beat of drums and the blast of trumpets, and by what still more grated on His ears, the hisses and insults of an ungrateful mob—and all this in the full light of midday. Hast thou the heart, after such a spectacle, to go in search of that empty applause of men which thou hast so often craved after?

II. Consider the inference that the Apostle derived from the example Christ had given; it was that he had to go forth publicly and openly profess the Name of Christ, and declare himself to be a follower of the Crucified One—an epithet which at that time was one of disgrace and reproach. Nowadays the simple name of Christian is no longer a reproach to be cast in one's face, but the fact of being an exemplary and pious Christian, and still more of being a poor, patient, humble, and mortified religious, is quite enough to forfeit the goodwill of the world, and to provoke its

sneers and scorn. *Deridetur justi simplicitas*—Job xii. 4—*The simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn.* Yet it is precisely this that thou must expect, and for which thou must nerve thyself, if thou wouldst make some little return for all that Christ has deigned to suffer for love of thee. Thou must show thyself by thy behaviour to be a real religious and a faithful follower of the Crucified One, not only within the walls of thy cell, but even, if needs be, outside thy monastery—*extra castra*. And if on this account worldlings, or, may be, even some of thy own brethren, laugh at thee—let them laugh! Thou wilt be mocked together with Jesus!

III. Consider that the Apostle invites thee to go forth to Jesus *extra castra*—*outside the camp*; because the greatest support thou canst have to enable thee to endure reproaches cheerfully, is the knowledge that thou art following and keeping close to thy Saviour on the road to Calvary. Thou must not, therefore, wait till Jesus bids thee follow Him, but thou must run after Him, and let people say of thee what they list, and hold thyself in readiness for every kind of railing and criticism, whether at the hands of thy own brethren who live under the same roof, or of thy most intimate friends, who will censure thee for giving way to scruples, or for being actuated by silly enthusiasm or carried away by indiscreet fervour. In the midst of these rebuffs, recall to mind the example of thy Jesus, and say to thyself, "For love of me Christ goes forth to Calvary laden with contumely, and shall I draw back and shrink from following Him faithfully, through fear of such remarks? It shall never be true! *Exeamus ad eum extra castra improprium ejus portantes*—*Let us go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.*"

SATURDAY IN THE SIXTH WEEK AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Veritatem autem facientes in charitate, crescamus in illo per omnia, qui est caput, Christus.—Ephes. iv. 15.

But doing the truth in charity, let us in all things grow up in Him Who is the Head, even Christ.

I. CONSIDER what is the meaning of growing up in Christ. It means that thou must be ever more and more determined to seek Jesus, to follow Jesus, and to cling to Jesus. This has to be effected, if thou art amongst the beginners, by abandoning evil and giving thyself up to the pursuit of good : if thou art amongst the more advanced, by making still greater efforts to imitate Him in His virtues : if amongst the number of the perfect, by reposing with even greater calm in Him, and by desiring nought else but Him, to the exclusion of all earthly goods. Enter into thyself, and see in which of these three states thou believest thyself to be, and blush at finding thyself forced to acknowledge that after so many years of religious life thou hast, perchance, hardly attained even the first stage.

II. Consider that so soon as thou ceasest to endeavour to advance in thy own particular grade, whether as a beginner, or a proficient, or an adept in perfection, by that very fact thou lovest ground : because if thou no longer makest any effort to advance in virtue, it is a sign that thou believest thyself to have already made progress enough ; and this persuasion is in itself a great check, and places thee on a level with that Pharisee who, whilst he believed himself to have attained a degree of perfection far above all the rest, was, as a matter of fact, much below the

poor publican on whom he had turned his back. If thou wouldst only refrain from viewing so complacently the good thou thinkest thou hast performed, and turn thy attention to what is wanting in thee, and is demanded of thee by thy religious state, ah, then indeed thou wouldst recognise the immense need thou hast of making progress ! Reflect, for a moment, how much more so many of thy own brother monks have done and are doing for God than thou : and this reflection will serve to make thee ashamed of thyself, and encourage thee to advance.

III. Consider that thou oughtest *in all things to grow up in Him—crescamus in illo per omnia*, by endeavouring to fix thy thoughts on Jesus more and more, by employing thy tongue more continually in His praises, and thy hands in working and labouring for His sake ; because just as the growth of the body must not be confined to one part only, but has to be proportionably equal in all its parts, so also must the path of the spiritual life extend itself to everything. Yet all this has to come about *facientes veritatem in charitate—doing the truth in charity* ; that is to say, that when thou hast to turn thy thoughts to others, or employ thyself in outward actions, thou must do what thy duty requires of thee—*faciens veritatem* ; and in the proper manner also, simply and solely for the love of God—in *charitate*. Happy art thou if this desire of growing *per omnia—in all things* as thou oughtest in Christ burns in thy heart. May it only be true that thou art not in actual need of beginning from the very commencement, and hast not hitherto gone backward since thy entrance into religion instead of going forward !

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Simile est regnum cœlorum homini patrifamilias, qui exiit primo mane conducere operarios.—Matth. xx. 1.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers.

I. CONSIDER that the labourers who were called *primo mane*—early in the morning, signify those peoples who lived in the very first ages of the world under the law of nature. Those who were called at the sixth hour are those who lived under the written law ; and those who were called at the last hour are the Apostles and their successors, who have come into the world during the times of the law of the Gospel to work in the vineyard of Our Lord—last indeed in order of time, but first by reason of the riches of grace that the Incarnate Son of God has bestowed on us in His teaching, His example, and His holy Sacraments. Do thou, therefore, thank the goodness of thy God in having caused thee to be born during this epoch of the law of grace ; but much more still is it thy duty to thank Him for having caused thee to be born amongst Christians, and given thee so many opportunities of enjoying His gifts in such profusion. How many there are amongst pagans who, if they had had the same aids as thou hast enjoyed to live like a real Christian, would have served Almighty God more faithfully and far better than thou hast.

II. Consider that the several distinct occasions on which the householder called the labourers : namely, at the beginning, at the middle, and at the close of the day, are meant to show how Almighty God calls some to His service from the first dawn of the use of reason, others in their youth, and others at an advanced age.

Nay, there are even some whom He calls several times, and on different occasions : it being His Will, through His excessive goodness, to overcome the resistance and obstinacy of their stubborn will by repeated invitations to serve Him. Reflect, now, how often thou hast withstood the pressing impulses of Almighty God whilst He called thee to the religious state, and acknowledge the great mercy He has shown thee, considering that He might have called so many others who would have answered His call more speedily and served Him more faithfully.

III. Consider how Almighty God does not measure the time nor count the years when rewarding those who serve Him, but He looks to the amount of fervour and the store of virtues acquired : hence those labourers who came at the last hour were preferred to all those who came before them and had worked a longer time. Thou countest the years of thy religious life, and puttest thyself in many ways before thy younger brethren as being older in religion, by laying claim to particular exemptions and permissions ; reckon rather the virtues and the good habits thou hast acquired, whether of mortification, of obedience, of purity of intention in thy actions, and thou wilt then have plenty of reason to blush at thyself, and to humble thyself even below the very novices at seeing thyself in the number indeed of the called, but not of the chosen—*multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi*.

MONDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Qui in stadio currunt, omnes quidem currunt, sed unus accipit bravium? Sic currite ut comprehendatis.—1 Cor. ix. 24.

Know you not that they that run in the race all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain.

I. CONSIDER that the present life is, as it were, a race-course, and the goal that has to be reached is the glory of Paradise. Everybody is admitted to compete in the race, but how many, instead of running, stand still! There are countless numbers of so-called runners who do not deign to do so much as to take one step forward, because they are possessed by a spirit of laziness, and taken up by amusements and the pursuit of earthly interests. And if amongst all those who run one only reaches the goal, what will happen in the case of those who do not even stir? In embracing the monastic life, thou hast entered thy name as intending to run towards the goal, but that is not enough if thou dost not strain every nerve to reach it.

II. Consider who is this fortunate individual of whom it is said that he wins the prize. Is it, perchance, one only of all those who are strenuously engaged in the pursuit of virtue? No, certainly; because there are many who are saved. But it is he only who perseveres. See, hence, how important a thing it is not to be inconstant, as thou perchance art, in the practice of virtue. On thy first entrance into religion thou beganst to run: but how soon thou grewest tired! Hardly dost thou undertake any devotion, than thou at once growest weary of it—a bad sign indeed. Try to overcome thy natural fickleness, for it is too dangerous a thing to trifle with: it is one

of the surest signs of belonging to the list of those who will eventually be damned.

III. Consider that it is not enough simply to move if thou desirest to reach the goal, but it behoveth thee to run continually: *Sic currite ut comprehendatis*—*So run that you may obtain*; because in the service of God it is not possible to go along at one's ease. It is necessary to toil, to exert one's self and pursue the journey with all the more energy the more nearly the end is reached. Would to God that a contrary line of conduct were not pursued by thee under the pretext of having been a long time in religion. Moreover, the apostle says: *Sic currite*—*So run*—because the running has to be done properly, and not according to one's own whim and fancy. Thou must run along the path laid down for thee by thy rule, and in the track of thy elders who have gone before thee successfully; but above all, thou must propose to thyself the example of Christ, Who ran this race with the pace of a giant: *Exultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam*—Ps. xviii. 6—*He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way*. Unless thou actest in this manner, with all thy running thou wilt be doing what S. Augustine said of the exertions of the pagans: *Magni passus sed extra viam*—taking long steps, but not in the right road.

TUESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Quid prodest homini si mundum universum lucretur, animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur.—Matth. xvi. 26.

What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?

I. CONSIDER how Christ declares that it is not worth one's while, even at the price of all the kingdoms of the

earth, to lose one's soul ; for whenever it is lost, the fleeting possession of all the grandeur of this world will no longer be of any avail. Thinkest thou that the memory of the riches they enjoyed on earth brings any comfort to the many monarchs who are now raving in hell ? A gain once lost can no longer do aught but torment, and therefore these miserable wretches exclaim : *Quid nobis profuit superbia ? aut divitiarum jactantia quid contulit nobis ?*—Sap. v. 8.—*What hath pride profited us ? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us ?* And yet how many there are who damn themselves not in the acquisition of great kingdoms, but for a trifle so mean and grovelling and shameful, that one can hardly reflect on it without shedding tears ! There is no need for the devil to promise them *omnia regna mundi*—*all the kingdoms of the world* : a brutal pleasure suffices : the profit of a few coins is quite enough. Art thou not moved to compassion and sympathy at such dreadful and ruinous perversity. Learn at any rate to fear thy own ruin, and never to be so foolish as to risk the loss of thy own soul for a whim, for an outburst of passion, for the success of some cherished plan : even the seclusion of the cloister is not proof against the danger.

II. Consider that Christ does not say only that it is not worth thy while to lose thy soul for all the kingdoms of the world, but He says that it is not worth thy while at that price, even to inflict any damage or spiritual loss on thy soul : so that thou oughtest not to allow it to be stained or injured by even one venial sin, even though it were to gain all the gold and all the riches the world contains. And yet thou hast so little fear of committing venial sins over and over again, and deliberately, too, simply to satisfy some whim of thine, or some ill-curbed passion, which is productive of nothing else but punishment and thy own real loss.

III. Consider that Christ says it does not serve thy purpose, even at the price of the whole world, to deprive thy soul of one single degree of grace and glory which thou mayest gain by the practice of some little act of virtue, because every—even the least—degree of grace and glory is worth far more than the wealthiest kingdoms of the earth. There is not any one virtuous act thou canst possibly perform for God's sake for which He will not make thee a largess in return, which will infinitely surpass in value all the goods the world can promise thee—since all earthly grandeur is short-lived, empty, and unreal, whereas every additional degree of glory is a gain infinite in duration and in amount immeasurable. Why then art thou so heedless of this fact, and why dost thou let slip so many opportunities of doing good of which thou mightest so easily avail thyself from time to time during the day? *in terra sua*, that is to say, in paradise—*duplicia possidebunt*—Isa. lxi. 7—*they shall receive double*.

WEDNESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

O mors, bonum est judicium tuum!—Eccl. xli. 3.
O Death, thy judgment is good!

I. CONSIDER that death was brought into the world by sin, and death is the best preservative against sin. All sins more or less take their rise in love of the pleasures, the riches, and the honours of this world: and death, if we ponder on it seriously, is capable of stifling in our hearts every attachment to the attractions of the senses, because it puts an end to the pleasures, riches, and honours of the present. Fix thy

gaze on a dying man, and behold how all the pleasures and amusements he enjoyed are come to an end, and give place to pain, disgust, anxiety, and mental agony. Look at him as he lies on the bier after he is dead, and thou wilt see him stripped of all his riches : *Cum dormierit nihil secum auferet*—Job xxvii. 19—*When he shall sleep, he shall take away nothing with him.* Look at him in the grave, and thou wilt see all his glory buried with him : *Hodie extollitur, et eras non invenietur*—2 Macch. ii. 63—*To-day he is lifted up, and to-morrow he shall not be found.* Is not the thought of death enough to detach thee once for all from those humourings of self-love, from those little conveniences and paltry honours which thou goest in search of to the exceeding injury of thy spiritual advancement ? Endeavour to keep distinctly before thy eyes that idea of judgment concerning the comforts and honours of life which thou wilt form on thy death-bed.

II. Consider that death discovers also the mistakes and misconceptions we are under about the next world, giving us to see not only the pettiness and unreality of the present state of things, but also the importance and reality of the future existence [we now so little heed. In this world we are as it were in a room filled with smoke, which hinders us from seeing clearly either what is inside or what is outside ; but at the hour of death this obscurity will be no more, and then we shall learn that all that has passed in time is a mere dream, which vanishes on awaking, and that only that which is eternal is of any real worth or any real harm : *Quod æternum non est, nihil est*—*What is not eternal is nothing.* Take therefore for thy rule of conduct to do that which at the hour of death thou wouldst wish to have done : *O mors, bonum est judicium tuum!*—*O Death, thy judgment is good !*

III. Consider that when death comes there will no longer be any more time—*tempus non erit amplius*—

Apoc. x. 6—to correct the mistakes thou hast fallen into with respect to thy estimation of time and eternity : do not therefore put off thy conversion, but learn to despise the fleeting emptiness of this world and turn all thy thoughts to the acquisition of a lasting gain for the next world, because death, which is an indispensable law for all, will overtake thee when thou least expectest it : *Qua hora non putatis*—Luc. xii. 40. If death were now to make its appearance and summon thee into eternity in the state in which thou art at this moment, wouldst thou not earnestly long for a little more time to put the affairs of thy conscience into better order ? Do not therefore delay any longer, because then—*tempus non erit amplius*—there will no longer be any time.

THURSDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Stipendia peccati mors. Gratia autem Dei vita æterna.
—Rom. vi. 23.

The wages of sin is death. But the grace of God life everlasting.

I. CONSIDER that there are two most powerful kings—Almighty God and the devil—each of whom invites thee to fight under his own standard, and professes himself most willing to repay thee. Almighty God promises to reward thee for all thy good works, if thou wilt fight in His service ; the devil promises to reward thee for all thy bad works, if thou wilt fight under him, giving up to him the use of thy faculties and of thy senses as so many weapons of guilt : the tongue to speak detraction, the ears to hearken to vanity, the eyes to wantonness, the will to evil suggestions, and so on with all the rest. But oh, what a

difference there is between the rewards offered thee ! Endeavour, first of all, to know both thoroughly, so as not to make a mistake in thy choice.

II. Consider that the reward thou wouldst receive from the devil if thou wert to enlist in his service, is nothing else than death : *Stipendia peccati mors—The wages of sin is death.* Moreover, this death is not one only, but its deadly stroke is two-fold : death of guilt and death of punishment, and, besides, it will bring on premature death of even the body. The soul dies by the guilt of sin, although it is immortal, because it makes thee lose God, Who is the life of the soul, just as the soul is the life of the body. Oh, what a sad death is that which robs thee of a divine life ! But it is only right that he who scorns his Lord should lose Him. As the body, when once separated from the soul, becomes insupportable, and it is necessary to commit it to the grave, so also the soul, once separated from God, is more hateful to Him than the most noisome carrion, and He assigns to it a fitting housing, which is no other than hell, and the devil endeavours to drag it down into this frightful grave as speedily as he can by hastening the death of the body. As it was the devil who brought death into the world in the first instance, so also is he able to hasten its approach before its natural term. And then to what manifold ill-treatment, to how many disorders and diseases, does not the devil subject those who fight under his standard—and all to win for themselves an untimely death !

III. Consider how far preferable are the wages of such as fight in the service of God. He will give thee Himself, Who is the life of thy soul : *Ipse est vita tua et longitudo dierum tuorum—Deut. xxx. 20—He is the life and the length of thy days.* The life He bestows on thee is two-fold : life on earth of grace and spiritual consolation ; life in heaven of glory, where thou wilt enjoy for a never-ending eternity all the good that God

Himself enjoys. Wretched indeed are those wicked souls of whom it is written : *Eligent magis mortem quam vitam*—Jer. viii. 3—*They shall choose death rather than life.* Moreover, as the service of the devil unduly hastens the death of the body, so also does the service of Almighty God keep it away. *Timor Domini apponet dies*—Prov. x. 27—*The fear of the Lord shall prolong days.* In fact, do we not see that in religion there are many who live to a great age on account of their mortified and well-regulated way of living ? Such, therefore, are the wages offered thee by these two kings. Thank Almighty God from the bottom of thy heart for having called thee to fight under His standard. Yet even in religion there are those who fight under the devil's standard. Woe betide thee if thou shouldst unfortunately be amongst the number of these poor wretches !

FRIDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Lignum vitæ his qui apprehenderint eam ; et qui tenuerit eam beatus.—Prov. iii. 18.

She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her ; and he that shall retain her is blessed.

I. CONSIDER that since every individual of the human race has lost the privilege of primitive innocence, and suffered the shipwreck of sin, there is no other hope of safety, no other life-buoy than the cross of penance. This is called a tree of life, because this is the only hope we have left of being saved ; and we must needs cling firmly to it, otherwise we shall sink and be lost. When a ship has been dashed to pieces by the waves in the midst of the ocean, there is no other chance for the unfortunate passengers, if they wish to save their

lives, than to lay hold of some chance spar, and even then they have to struggle amongst themselves to be the first to reach it, and keep fast hold of it. Happy art thou if thou canst but realise that the cross is just such another plank of safety! Instead of leaving it alone for others, thou wouldst then most certainly wish it for thyself, and try hard to secure it. But because thou dost not now look upon the cross as the only means of saving thy life, it is no wonder that instead of striving after it thou puttest it away from thee by flying every occasion of suffering or of mortifying thyself, of humbling thyself and acting as a poor repentant sinner. Bear in mind also that as it is a sign that thou wilt be lost if thou spurnest and avoidest the cross, so also is it a sign of salvation if thou valuest and embracest it: *Lignum vitæ his qui apprehenderint eam—a tree of life to them that lay hold on her.*

II. Consider that it is not enough for a shipwrecked man merely to lay hold of the plank, he must hold it fast: and unless he has the nerve and courage to fight against the violence of the furious waves, he must inevitably be lost, just as though he had never laid hold of it at all. And so it is with the cross. What will it avail thee to embrace the cross lovingly, just for a little while, if in time of temptation thou allowest thyself to be dragged away from it and so abandonest it? *Qui tenuerit eam beatus*—he is the fortunate one that clings to it. Oh, how many there are that embrace the cross of a religious life! and how few there are that cling to it! When in His infinite mercy Almighty God called thee to a religious life, thou didst cheerfully embrace the cross, and bind thyself to it by the three vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience; and thou mightest with reason have exclaimed: *Absit mihi gloriari nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi*—Gal. vi. 14—*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.* In that solemn act thou didst

renounce with generosity, for love of Jesus, the pleasures, vanities, and riches of the world : reflect, now, for a little, what thy firmness of purpose has been ; for the mere fact of having once upon a time embraced the cross will profit thee little, unless thou cling close to it till the storms of life are over.

III. Consider that though the words *lignum vite* in the text under consideration, are said in praise of Divine Wisdom, still many of the Saints apply them in a mystical sense to the cross : because real wisdom on the part of the faithful consists, under the law of grace, in loving and embracing the cross of Christ. Though thou hadst never learnt even the first rudiments of perfection, thou art sure of reaching a high degree of glory in heaven, if only in this world thou art steady in thy purpose of not seeking aught else for thyself but the cross, and leaving to others comfort and preferment. Take, therefore, for thyself what the world hates in accordance with the teaching and the example given us on the cross by Jesus, and doubt not but that thou wilt be guided to the haven of rest with far less anxiety and risk than the so-called wise and prudent ones of this world, with all their learning and shrewdness.

SATURDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Vidi stultum firma radice ; et maledixi pulchritudini ejus statim.—Job v. 3.

I have seen a fool with a strong root ; and I cursed his beauty immediately.

I. CONSIDER that by the fool mentioned here is meant the wicked man that prospers, and is considered happy

by reason of his riches and wealth—and well does the name of fool suit him; for instead of laying out his goods in the purchase of the glory of Paradise, and out of gratitude to his heavenly benefactor, giving a portion of them to the poor, and employing them in other works of piety, he avails himself of them only to offend his God more grievously, and earn for himself severer punishment. Hast thou the heart to envy such an unenviable happiness, which indeed deserves rather the greatest compassion?

II. Consider that holy Job, so far from envying such a one, cursed him—*maledixi pulchritudini ejus—I cursed his beauty*; not that he desired or imprecated evil on his head, or uttered any injurious word against him, but in this sense, that he could not but form in his heart a most unfavourable foreboding of the dreadful evils that might befall him at any moment. Oh what a praiseworthy and wholesome way is this of cursing the good fortune of the wicked, as a preventive against the danger of being dazzled by its sheen, or of falling in love with such disastrous thrift. *Noli æmulari in eo qui prosperatur in via sua*—Ps. xxxvi. 7—*Envy not the man who prospereth in his way*. Be not jealous of the man that succeeds in his undertakings. For the prosperity of the wicked is a very bad sign, and, when it is continual, it is a still worse sign, inasmuch as it shows that Almighty God seconds his temporal interests in this life to punish him more severely in the next. The more enviable his good fortune appears to thee on account of its being so constant, the really less reason hast thou for envying it, if thou dost but reflect on the downfall that awaits him: *Sicut olera herbarum cito decident*—Ps. xxxvi. 2—*They shall shortly wither away as grass*.

III. Consider that Job did not hesitate an instant to pass this unfavourable judgment on the prosperity of the wicked, as no sooner did he set eyes on it than

he cursed it : *Maledixi pulchritudini ejus statim*. Now it was precisely this quickness of appreciation that showed him to be the wise man that he was. Had he done so after some delay, he would only have done what is within the reach of everybody, since even the wicked themselves who enjoy actual prosperity will in course of time recognise that their good fortune was not enviable at all, and will exclaim, with all the rest of the damned : *Quid nobis profuit superbia ? aut divitiarum jactantia quid contulit nobis ?*—Sap. v. 8—*What hath pride profited us ? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us ?* The sooner a man grasps this truth the wiser he is. Do thou, therefore, imitate the wisdom of Job, and when thou happenest to behold the luxury and grandeur of worldlings, say at once to thyself : *Non zeles gloriam et opes peccatoris, non enim scis quæ futura sit illius subversio*—Eccl. ix. 16—*Envy not the glory and riches of a sinner : for thou knowest not what his ruin shall be ;* else thou wilt run a risk of fixing thy affections on and envying their false happiness and their really lamentable prosperity.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Exiit qui seminat, seminare semen suum.—Luc. viii. 5.
The sower went out to sow his seed.

I. CONSIDER that this earth of ours can never of itself produce aught but thorns and briars, unless it be tilled and sown by the husbandman. So also the soil of thy heart is unable to bring forth of itself the least virtuous act, unless the Divine Husbandman scatters the heavenly seed of His grace upon it. Even though thou hadst acquired a greater number of virtues than

the holiest man on earth, thou couldst not of thyself conceive even so much as a good thought without the actual aid of Divine grace. Just in the same way as, according to the theory of the ancients on the formation of pearls, all the waters of the ocean are unable to accomplish this feat without the dewdrops of heaven. If thou wouldst keep thyself humble, thou must nourish a lively sense of this certain truth of faith, and make more earnest and frequent recourse to Almighty God for His aid.

II. Consider that the Divine Husbandman never fails to scatter His heavenly seed in the hearts of men, sometimes more and sometimes less, to the end that they may bring forth the fruit of virtue. This seed consists in those interior lights which He causes to flash across the understanding, in those desires and inspirations that silently speak to the heart, in the good example of thy brethren, in spiritual reading, and even in the familiar conversation of those whose discourse is edifying—by all of which the will is strengthened and encouraged in the practice of virtue. Reflect now on the many lights and inspirations and helps thou hast hitherto received from Almighty God, and examine how thou hast corresponded with them ; if the profit thou hast derived from them is small, the fault is all thy own.

III. Consider what has been the cause of thy losing the fruit of so much and such excellent seed. It can easily be traced to one of the three causes which the Gospel assigns. In the first place it may be that this heavenly seed has fallen by the wayside—*cecidit super viam*—by reason of thy never keeping a watch over thy heart, but always keeping it like a high road, open to every thought that comes first, and engrossed by a crowd of earthly affections which allow no room for the inspirations of grace, that grace which demands as a first and necessary condition that thou shouldst

keep a guard over thy heart and be recollected. In the second place, it may be that this seed of grace has fallen on a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away, because it had no moisture—*cecidit supra petram, et natum aruit quia non habebat humorem*—because thou makest no effort to soften thy heart, which has got hardened by dint of bad habits, either by heartfelt devotion or by treating with God in prayer. Thirdly, *aliud cecidit inter spinas*—other some fell among thorns, because thy heart is like a copse of briars—all taken up, as it is, by an overwhelming anxiety about temporal matters, about thy studies, thy employments, or even, perhaps, about unnecessary amusements and useless cares. Keep a watch over thy heart, try in good earnest to be devout, and be persuaded of this, that eternity alone is of any real consequence. In this way the seed of the heavenly Husbandman will produce good fruit in thy heart.

MONDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Eligite hodie, cui potissimum servire debeatis.—Jos. xxiv. 15.

Choose this day whom you would rather serve.

I. CONSIDER that the devil invites all, especially during these days of sin, to amuse themselves, to seek after pleasure and gratification in spite of Almighty God and to the damage of their own souls. Thy Saviour, on the contrary, invites thee to practise penance, mortification, and self-denial. Which, then, of these two wouldst thou rather follow? By virtue of the promises thou madest in Baptism, and much more still by reason of thy religious profession, thou hast refused

all the invitations of the devil in order to give thyself up, wholly and entirely, to follow Christ. How sad, then, would it not be if thou shouldst be among the number of those who turn their backs on their Lord, and deliberately give themselves up to seek after their own convenience, after amusements and preferments, in conformity with the maxims of Lucifer !

II. Consider what an immense difference there is between the advantages to be derived from following the call of Jesus and the invitation of Lucifer. Jesus invites thee to take up thy cross in the shape of humiliation and mortification, but gives thee the help of His grace to overcome the repugnance thy corrupt nature causes thee to feel, and sweetens all that is bitter by spiritual consolation and the peace of a good conscience, so much so, that all the joys the world can offer are not half so delightful as are the tears shed at the foot of the crucifix. It is just the reverse with Lucifer, for although he invites thee to enjoy thyself, he lets thee feel nothing else but thorns and anguish, by mixing so much uneasiness of mind with the little taste of honied poison he gives thee, that all his happiness is not enough to smother the least of the troubles he brings upon thee. If thou couldst but unveil and contemplate the heart of a religious who is forgetful of his profession, and has allowed himself to be allured by the flattering promises of the devil, ah, how much more bitterness and discontent wouldst thou not see there than in the heart of another who makes it his daily business to mortify himself and embrace the cross of Christ !

III. Consider the difference there is between the reward bestowed after death on those that shall have followed respectively the invitation of Christ and the invitation of the devil ; for after all the ill-treatment inflicted by the devil on his followers in this life, he gives them nothing else but devouring flames—like the

Gabaonites of old, who were wont to crucify their enemies alive and burn them when dead. But Jesus bestows on His followers in this world a life of grace, cheered by numberless spiritual consolations, and then afterwards endows them with a life of glory, an eternal life, a life which will plunge them into a sea of happiness: *Ego veni ut vitam habeant—I am come that they may have life*—a life of grace now, *et abundantius habeant*—Joan. x. 10—and may have it more abundantly in a life of glory hereafter. Is it possible that thou canst not yet make up thy mind to renounce once for all the devil's interests, and further those of Jesus in real earnest by consecrating thyself entirely to His divine Will?

TUESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Hi sunt quibus procella tenebrarum servata est in æternum.—Jud. i. 13.

These are they to whom the storm of darkness is reserved for ever.

I. CONSIDER that the damned souls in hell are threatened with darkness, not only palpable like the darkness that overspread Egypt, but with a boisterous darkness which will be twofold—exterior and interior. The exterior darkness is a portion of the pain of sense, which will be most awful from three distinct causes, by reason, namely, of the place itself, by reason of its straitness, and by reason of its horrible torment. In the first place, then, this darkness will be most frightful by reason of the place itself—because it is the innermost centre of the earth, far away from the light of heaven, like a grave without a single ray of daylight: *Descenderunt vivi in infernum aperti humo*—Num. xvi. 33

—*They went down alive into hell, the ground closing upon them.* Secondly, on account of its straitness, because the bodies of all the damned will be cast into this place after the last judgment, heaped together and piled one on the top of the other to such a degree that there will be no moving a single inch from their aching position : *Calcavi eos in furore meo*—Isa. lxiii. 3—*I have trampled on them in my indignation.* Thirdly, on account of the dreadful torments that are inflicted there, because this hideous grave has for its bottom a pool of burning brimstone : *Stagnum ignis ardentis sulphure*—Apoc. xix. 20—*A pool of fire burning with brimstone, which will send forth a volume of most searching flames and suffocating smoke*—*procella tenebrarum*—an awful storm of darkness. What will become of thee if thou shouldst ever behold thyself in this pitiful state? Oh, how much better it is for thee to live now amidst the sweet hardships of monastic observance, that so thou mayest never find thyself there!

II. Consider the interior darkness that will overspread the mind of the damned soul. This darkness will take its rise in the first place from the absolute privation of every light-giving grace; secondly, from the agonising fierceness of his torments, which will never allow him to take off his mind a single instant to think of anything else; thirdly, from his passions, which will darken his intellect and will. Even in the case of a wise and prudent man, a burst of violent anger is quite enough to overshadow his mental faculties: what then will it be in the case of the damned, infuriated by a wild rage against God Himself, Whom they will ever blaspheme and hate, without ever humbling themselves under His Almighty hand even in this pitiable state? Humble thyself now in the presence of God, that so thou mayest never come to find thyself in a like plight.

III. Consider that although as a general rule the

most violent storms are those which last the shortest time, the fury of the storm to which the damned are exposed will last for ever: *Usque in æternum non videbit lumen*—Ps. xlviii. 20—*He shall never see light*. If thou findest it unbearable to remain motionless in thy bed amidst the darkness of even one sleepless night, but seekest relief by continually changing position, what will it be to be pinned down on a bed of flames in an unchangeable posture, and in the midst of such horrible darkness, without the faintest hope of ever more being freed or beholding the light of day? If thou wouldst never come to find thyself in such frightful darkness, shut not thy eyes now to the light of God's holy inspirations and of the truths of the Gospel, nor so hinder thyself from seeing clearly the obligations of thy religious state. If thou showest a tendency to foster this wilful blindness now, thou art fostering thy future damnation. Oh, how many who have spent their lives in the cloister are at this very moment buried in that never-ending darkness—and why? Because *dilixerunt magis tenebras quam lucem*—they preferred to shut their eyes rather than see the light!

WEDNESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Contendite intrare per angustam portam; quia multi, dico vobis, quærent intrare, et non poterunt.—Luc. xiii. 24.

Strive to enter by the narrow gate, for many, I say to thee, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able.

I. CONSIDER that it is not such an easy thing to enter by the narrow gate of Paradise as thou perhaps imaginest it to be. Christ tells us that great efforts

are necessary—*contendite*—by reason of the opposition and contradiction that exist between the flesh and the spirit. The flesh does not at all fancy having to pass by so narrow a door as is that of mortification, penance, humility and obedience. The spirit sees the necessity of passing by it, since there is no other entrance into heaven than by that same door through which Christ Himself passed. Thus there is a continual disagreement and strife between soul and body, which reduces a man to a state of exceeding great weariness. And yet there is no choice : thou must perforce battle on bravely with a generous heart, for it is a question of too great importance to be slighted. Happy art thou if thou managest to go through successfully, and thrice miserable if thou failest ! Thou must either exert thyself to enter, or else be damned !

II. Consider that by leaving the world to enter a monastery, thou didst so far by the grace of God fight manfully, by the very fact of parting with all those advantages so gratifying to the flesh, in the shape of liberty, ease, and the society of friends and relations ; but this is not enough to gain admittance into Paradise, any more than it has been enough in the case of so many others who have failed to persevere in battling on to the end. Frightened at the difficulties they encountered, and daunted by the continual contradictions of the flesh, they have grown weary and lost courage, and so in the end given up the contest : and thus, after all their previous victories, they have wandered off the right path and missed the gate of Paradise. If thou art desirous not to incur so sad a misfortune, it behoves thee to persevere in fighting to the very last.

III. Consider that whoso once begins to grow remiss in this contest, and to lessen his efforts to enter heaven, will not afterwards be able to regain his energy when he would perhaps fain do so : *Querent intrare, et non*

poterunt—They shall seek to enter, and shall not be able ; because when once he has laid down his arms and yielded the victory over and over again to the flesh, when the time comes that he would wish that the spirit should have the upper hand he will no longer know how to set about resisting his passions : for he will find himself enervated by his bad habits, and deprived of those more especial helps of grace which he needs in order to be able to conquer. The easiest and safest method to ensure one's persevering to the end in fighting, is to accustom the spirit to resist the flesh unflinchingly and to keep the upper hand on all occasions. *Vince te ipsum*—says Abbot Gersen—conquer thyself in everything in which thy inferior appetite opposes the dictates of reason and the Will of Almighty God.

THURSDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Nemo mittens manum suam ad aratrum et respiciens retro, aptus est regno Dei.—Luc. ix. 62.

No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

I. CONSIDER what Christ gave us to understand when He addressed these words to the young man who wished to follow Him in the apostolate, but first of all wanted leave to acquaint his friends of his determination and to put his domestic affairs in order. He meant in the first place to give us to understand that whoever is desirous of putting his hand to the plough, that is to say, of embracing evangelical perfection in following Christ—an undertaking which is laborious

to our corrupt nature, as ploughing is in agriculture—such a one will never be fit for the kingdom of Christ on earth, where we must work and labour, nor for the kingdom of Christ in heaven, where we shall enjoy ourselves, unless he makes up his mind to embrace this state of perfection with generosity. He must bid farewell to all attachments, to all human respect, because this is an undertaking that requires resolute men—men that are detached from, and who despise, all that the world most highly prizes. What were thy dispositions in coming to follow Christ? what were thy ends and motives? Didst thou enter religion to follow Christ and to cultivate in thy own heart the virtues peculiar to thy state, or didst thou enter for unworthy ends and human interests? If thou camest to follow Christ and labour for His kingdom, thou hast indeed reason to rejoice; but if thou camest from any worldly motive, see that thou detest thy error and rectify it, protesting henceforth that thy only aim in religion shall be to serve Christ and to suffer for Christ.

II. Consider that Christ meant also to give us to understand by these words, that neither is he fit for His kingdom who, after having put his hand to the plough and generously begun his religious career, does not continue steadfast in carrying out the good works he has undertaken, and in showing himself staunch in the execution of his good resolutions, but either forgets to practise them, or leaves them off altogether from fickleness, or cowardice, or sloth. Reflect seriously on the holy resolutions thou madest when thou camest to religion, and see how far thou hast been faithful to them, for it will avail thee but little towards fitting thyself for the kingdom of Christ if thou only makest a promise but dost not keep it, or if thou startest on the path of perfection and dost not continue thereon. Didst thou, perhaps, make a fervent beginning, and

now findest thyself living in tepidity? If so, fear much lest the threat in the Apocalypse be not about to be verified in thy case: *Quia tepidus es incipiam te evomere ex ore meo*—Apoc. iii. 16—*Because thou art tepid, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth.*

III. Consider that Christ meant above all to signify by these words, that neither he is fit for His kingdom who looks back with the intent of regaining for himself what he once left for God's sake. This looking and turning back is done, not only by such as return to the world bodily, as apostates do—*vasa iræ apta in interitum*—Rom. ix. 22—*who are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction*—but it is done by those also who, allowing themselves to be enticed by what they have already left for God's sake, return to the same in desire and affection. It will profit thee little to wear the habit of a religious and live like a worldling. See, therefore, that thou remainest constant, not only in thy outward profession of a religious life, but in a heartfelt love for the service of thy Lord, diligently cutting off every sort of affection and attachment to the things of the world. In this way thou wilt be able to say truly, on thy death-bed: *Non recessit retro cor nostrum*—Ps. xliii. 19—*Our heart hath not turned back*; thus wilt thou fit thyself for the kingdom of Christ on earth by a holy life, and for the kingdom of Christ in heaven by enjoying the fruit of thy good works.

FRIDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Calicem, quem dedit mihi Pater, non bibam illum?—
Joan. xviii. 11.

The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?

I. CONSIDER that by these words, addressed by Christ to S. Peter, who wished to defend Him in the garden, thou mayest learn what answer to give thy rebellious nature when it seeks to withdraw thee from a ready acceptance of any trial that is sent thee by Almighty God. For, in the first place, Our Lord sought to lessen the dread He had of His terrible passion, by styling it *calicem, a cup*—whereas by the prophets it was spoken of as a sea and a flood. So thou, also, when Almighty God sends thee any disgrace or trial, or ailing, instead of bringing before thy mind every possible reason to make the evil appear greater than it is, endeavour rather to lessen it in thy own estimation, and accept it as a mere cupful. It was the great desire which Christ had of suffering for thee, that made His passion seem to Him as but a small chalice; do thou, then, also strive to entertain some little love of suffering for Christ's sake, and every trial will appear light to thee; or, again, compare thy trial with the sins thou hast committed, or with the grace which strengthens thee, or with the glory which awaits thee, and in this way it will appear altogether insignificant.

II. Consider that Christ said that this chalice had been presented to Him, not by Judas, nor by His enemies the Jews, but by His beloved Father—*quem dedit mihi Pater*—in order to teach thee that in time of trial thou must not look at it as proceeding from

thy enemy, or from the accident which was the immediate occasion of it, but thou must fix thy gaze on Almighty God, thy tender Father, Who has Himself brought it about for thy own greater good, and Who never shows Himself to be more really a Father to thee than when He chastises thee : *Quem enim diligit Dominus, corripit, et quasi in filio complacet sibi*—Prov. iii. 12—*For whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth, and as a father in the son He pleaseth Himself.* Remark, too, that Christ did not say : *Calicem quem dat,* but *calicem quem dedit, mihi Pater* ; that thou shouldst understand that thy trial was from the beginning of thy election designed as a necessary means for thee to win that glory which is held out to thee. So that if thou shakest off thy burden, thou at once unlinkest the chain of thy predestination, and exposest thyself to the danger of being lost, seeing that thy salvation is bound up with no one thing so much as with suffering : *Omnes qui placuerunt Deo, per multas tribulationes transierunt fideles*—Judith viii. 23—*All that have pleased God passed through many tribulations, remaining faithful.*

III. Consider those words of Christ, *Non bibam illum ?—Shall I not drink it ?*—by which He meant that if His own passion was a medicinal chalice, not, indeed, in His own regard, but on our behalf, at any rate it was a chalice that would come to an end. In the same way thy trial also may be a bitter draught, but it will soon be over. When thou takest a bitter medicine, thou experiencest, perhaps, disgust and nausea ; but that soon passes away, and is followed by the recovery of thy health. And how long, after all, will thy trial last ? A few years—a few months, perhaps only a few days—and the benefit it will confer on thee will last for ever. Wouldst thou lose courage then ? No ; by all means take the cup from the hands of thy Father, and press it eagerly to thy lips ; for the very

reason that it is bitter, it is a wholesome draught, that will give thee life—eternal life.

SATURDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Si non vigilaveris veniam ad te, tanquam fur; et nescies quâ horâ veniam ad te.—Apoc. iii. 3.

If thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee.

I. CONSIDER that Our Lord exhorts thee to be on thy guard, and threatens thee if thou failest to do so, because it is His wish not to find thee unprovided at the hour of death. If, however, it should be thy misfortune to behold Him come on thee unawares, like a thief, the fault will be all thy own. It is for this very reason that He tells thee beforehand that He will come when thou least expectest Him, so that thou mayest be always on the look-out, to thy own greater advantage. Yet how little thought thou givest to this truth, just as though the threat of taking unawares those who do not hold themselves in readiness for death, were made for others and not for thyself!

II. Consider that after having warned thee to keep a good look-out, or that otherwise He will come like a thief at thy death to find thee, Our Lord adds that thou shalt not know at what hour He will come to thee: *Et nescies quâ horâ veniam ad te.* And why does He say this? It is to give thee to understand that when He does come like a thief, altogether unexpected, not even thou thyself wilt be aware of His coming, and no one will inform thee of it. He will deceive

the doctors as to the moment of His coming, and all those about thee, so that no one will be able to say to thee, "Lo ! the thief is at thy door !" Remember how many are snatched away by such sudden deaths that they are seen dead before they are seen dying. Our Lord gives thee a warning that the same thing will befall thee one of these days, if thou art not careful, because an unprovided death is the ordinary punishment inflicted on those who do not heed repeated warnings.

III. Consider that when thou art really intent on preparing thyself for the arrival of thy Lord, He will not come then to find thee like a thief, but rather like a friend, because then thou wilt live, not only stripped of the goods of this world, by means of thy vows, but thou wilt also live detached from them in affection. Thus when death is at thy door, He will not have to rob thee of temporal and earthly goods, but He will bestow on thee heavenly and eternal riches. Keep thyself, therefore, with thy mind's eye always on the look-out for the coming of thy Lord, and watch over thy heart lest it should wander and begin to love and entwine its affections round objects which come to an end with death, and by this means the coming of Christ at that hour will not be for thee that of an unlooked-for thief, but of a long-desired friend.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Quid tibi vis faciam ? at ille dixit : Domine, ut videam.
—Luc. xviii. 41.

What wilt thou that I do to thee ? but he said : Lord, that I may see.

I. CONSIDER in the poor blind man of Jericho the very picture of the state of thy own soul, as he sat by the wayside in poverty and darkness, begging his livelihood from the passers-by. This is precisely thy state : blind to the things of God and the truths of eternity, but wilfully blind to them, because thou appliest thy mind so very little to such things, all intent as thou art on temporal and present interests. Thou art poor in virtue and interior spirit, because thou hast hitherto been sluggishly sitting, without taking a single step in search of perfection ; thou hast been begging from creatures wherewith to satisfy the cravings of thy ill-regulated appetites. Acknowledge and regret thy misery, and humbly beg Almighty God to give thee grace to rise from so deplorable a state.

II. Consider that the only remedy left to the blind man of Jericho, was to have recourse to Jesus with great trust, and resolutely turn a deaf ear to the many reproaches heaped upon him, and overcome the opposition he met with in carrying out his design : *Increpabant eum, ut taceret*—*They rebuked him, that he should hold his peace ;* but he, on the contrary, raising his voice, still more loudly cried out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me—*Jesu, fili David, miserere mei*. So also thou must have recourse with great confidence to the boundless goodness of Almighty God, in order to be enabled to rise from thy spiritual misery. But in order to do this thou must needs

overcome valiantly the many difficulties and great opposition thou art sure to meet with ; for thou hast to deal with thy unruly passions within, and the many obstacles which the false love of thy friends will put in thy way from without ; thou hast to withstand the inclinations of thy flesh, the flattering baits of the world, and the temptations of the devil. Above all, thou must strip thyself of all the bad habits thou hast contracted, like the blind man, who *projecto vestimento suo exiliit* — Marc. x. 50 — *casting off his garment, leaped up*. If thou unflinchingly bearest up against the attacks of these foes, and unceasingly beggest Almighty God for help, thou art sure of obtaining thy request.

III. Consider what Christ said to the blind man : *Quid tibi vis faciam ?* — *What wilt thou that I do to thee ?* — thus showing His readiness to do him any favour. Imagine that He says the same to thee, longing to bestow on thee whatever thy heart can desire. But it is His wish that thou shouldst ask Him, and that thou shouldst obtain what thou desirest by the merit of thy faith and by the persevering earnestness of thy prayers, so that He may be able to say to thee as He did to the blind man : *Fides tua te salvum fuit* — *Thy faith hath made thee whole*. The blind man begged for the restoration of his sight as a remedy for all his sorrows : in like manner oughtest thou to beseech Him above all things to enlighten the eyes of thy mind, as this is the best means thou canst have of abandoning thy vices and following in the track of Christ, like the blind man of to-day's Gospel, who followed him praising God : *Sequebatur eum magnificans Deum*.

MONDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA
SUNDAY.

Visa itaque turba de retro et ab ante adorantes, dicite in cordibus vestris, Te oportet adorare Domine.—Baruch vi. 5.

When you see the multitude behind and before adoring them, say in your hearts, Thou ought to be adored, O Lord.

I. CONSIDER that one of the most beautiful and most necessary practices to enable a religious to lead a spiritual life, is contained in the advice given by Almighty God to His chosen people when they were taken captives to Babylon. When, said He, you enter the city, you will see it full of false gods, carried in triumphal procession through the public streets by a throng of infatuated people ; but do not for all that allow yourselves to be dragged by their example to esteem or honour their idols, and remember that I alone am the true God, and in your hearts pay Me the honour which is My due." Thou also wilt have great difficulty in holding fast the maxims of faith in dealing with so many who are ever speaking and declaiming against them—people who are slaves either to pleasure, money, or ambition. What then must thou do to remain firm ? Thou must interiorly condemn their error, saying to thyself that they are all mistaken, and that thy fixed determination is to adore Christ only in His poverty and ignominy on the cross. If thou dost not act in this wise, thou wilt not be far from thy own downfall, because the example of others will vitiate thy way of thinking, and cause thee to make little account of those goods which alone are real and eternal.

II. Consider what a baneful influence the example of those who run after the goods of this world is calculated to produce in thee by dragging thee along with them. In the first place their ranks are considerable, both in number and position, and they are to be found both amongst those who live in the world and those also who live in the cloister: *visa turba de retro et a bante*. And even though thou shouldst not experience great difficulty in setting at nought the crooked ideas of seculars, alas! how much more difficult wilt thou not find it to set aside the opinion of those who live under the same roof with thee, many of whom it is true may be behind thee as inferiors in years, occupation, and influence, but many others of whom will be before thee in one or all of these ways! How often will it not happen that those very individuals who ought to be a check on thee, will be the very ones to urge thee on to run after vanity! But whether these individuals who cling to worldly ideas be on before thee or behind thee, thou hast to scorn them equally like a vile mob, and oppose thy conduct courageously to the tide of general error, as Tobias did, who, on seeing all around him adore Jeroboam's idols: *cum irent omnes ad vitulos aureos*—Tob. i. 5—*when all went to the golden calves*, withdrew all alone to adore the true God in the Temple at Jerusalem.

III. Consider in what way thou hast to contradict by thy behaviour the bad example of this despicable rabble. Thou hast not to go and rush violently upon it—it would be an undertaking of too great difficulty for thee to face so many, some below thee and others above thee; but thou must gainsay their conduct within thy own heart, and say to thyself: *Te oportet adorare, Domine*—*Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord*. Nor is it enough to do this once or thrice, but whenever thou perceivest anything, whether in the streets or at home, in the conversation of seculars or of thy

own brethren, which is calculated to give bad example, and win thy affection to the side of vain worldliness. If thou wilt but have this advice in readiness when the time comes, it will perhaps be enough of itself to keep thee faithful, and hinder thee from ever leaving the true God for a false idol.

SHROVE TUESDAY.

Ducunt in bonis dies suos, et in puncto ad inferna descendunt.—Job xxi. 13.

They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell.

I. CONSIDER what little reason thou hast to be envious of the mirth of wicked worldlings. *Ducunt in bonis dies suos*—they spend their days in wealth: they live merrily, but only for a few days; for who amongst them all can boast of having enjoyed even one whole year of happiness? No, there is scarcely one who in the course of the whole year will have thoroughly enjoyed one single day. They spend their lives in feasting, in balls, in debauchery; but how many a bitter morsel are they continually forced to swallow, whilst seeking to have their own way! They have anxieties far more harrowing than any thou canst ever have to endure in the religious state. Even though they had no other cares, the anguish of a bad conscience alone is quite enough to make them unhappy: instead, therefore, of envying them, thou must pity them.

II. Consider that even though worldlings were to live always really happy, yet even then thou oughtest to pity them: inasmuch as if now *ducunt dies suos in*

bonis—they spend their days in wealth, afterwards ad inferna descendunt—they go down to hell, to make atonement, by a long and painful amends, for their short-lived holiday which they unreasonably kept before the proper time. How far better for thee it is to spend the few days of this present life as a vigil, in penance, in poverty, in religious subjection, with a view to keeping the holiday afterwards in eternity, than to spend this short period in merriment and dissipation, to be followed by a most awful vigil that will never come to an end ! Then will the unbridled license that sinners have given to their passions, make them incur a special penalty for each particular vice: for their pride they will behold themselves cast into fetters and chains, to be Satan's slaves for ever ; for their covetousness they will find themselves reduced to the most utter want of every comfort and necessary, without being able to obtain even so much as a drop of water ; their gluttony will be punished by an unbroken fast, without else to allay their hunger than sulphur and molten lead, or to quench their thirst than gall and wormwood ; for their sins of lust their bodies will be seared by flames, torn to pieces by scorpions, and handed over to every conceivable kind of torture for never-ending ages. Other vices will have their corresponding penalties. Reflect, now, whether it be worthy while to give thyself up in this life to a merry-making which will be followed by an eternity of such dreadful atonement !

III. Consider that by way of appendix to the announcement of such great woe, it is added that this dreadful turn of fortune will take place all in a moment: *In puncto ad inferna descendunt—in a moment they shall go down to hell*. How much more keenly, therefore, will not this sudden change be felt, from laughter to weeping, from lavishment to penury, from wantonness to torture ! Unless indeed, perchance, this

meaning be preferred, that *in puncto ad inferna descendunt*—*in a moment they shall go down to hell*; because it often happens that in the act of merry-making they are snatched away by a sudden death; or else, because they are thrown headlong, like so much lead, into hell by reason of the hideous sins with which they burden their consciences amidst their amusements, inasmuch as their heinousness prevents them from obtaining time for repentance, and they are hurled into the bottomless abyss, hardly before they are aware of their ruin. Wilt thou not, after all this, acknowledge the pitiable state of these worldlings, and thank God for having placed thee, through His infinite mercy, in holy religion?

ASH WEDNESDAY.

Memento homo quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris.
—Missale. In Fer. IV. cinerum.

Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.

I. CONSIDER that God made man immortal both in soul and body: *Creavit hominem inextremabilem*—Sap. ii. 23—*God created man incorruptible*: enriching him with the gifts of grace and original justice, by virtue of which he enjoyed a complete mastery over his passions and over the whole of creation; so that after a certain period he would have passed from the earthly paradise to be eternally happy with God in the heavenly paradise. But no sooner did Adam disobey the command of Almighty God, than he was stripped of all these advantages, and condemned to nine hundred years of most rigorous penance for his

fault; and not even this would have been enough to make good his misdeed, without the infinite merits of our Redeemer. As often as thou hast sinned, so often hast thou repeated the cause of all the evil that Adam brought on himself and all his offspring. Now, for so many faults, what penance hast thou done up to the present time? Just as the merits of Christ alone were not enough to make amends for the original sin of Adam without his own repentance, so neither will they blot out thy sins without thy repentance. Begin, then, at least in these days of Lent to atone for the past, as this is essentially a time of penance.

II. Consider that as rebels are not only despoiled of all their property and condemned to the gibbet, but even their dwellings are levelled to the ground, so also the dwelling—that is to say, the body—of Adam was in like manner doomed to be resolved into its elements by death, and to return to dust: *in pulverem reverteris—to dust thou shalt return.* Thou also, in thy character of son of Adam and heir of his misfortunes, art condemned to die; but thou hast also brought this same sentence on thy own head still more deservedly by thy own individual sins. How, then, comes it that thou givest so little thought to death, and livest with so great a fondness for this earth, just as though thou hadst never to leave it? Think about penance—and think often about it; and in this way death, which has been decreed as a penalty for sin, will serve as a curb when thou art tempted to break out into fresh excesses.

III. Consider that Holy Church puts ashes on thy head on this solemn day, in order that by thus placing forcibly before thy mind's eye the fact that thou wilt ere long have to quit this world, to be reduced to ashes, and be made the food of disgusting worms, thou mayest learn now to look down upon the perishable things of the present time, and make timely pro-

vision for the future of eternity, by making atonement to the justice of God for thy faults. Therefore, *memento mori*—remember that thou hast to die, and never let a day go by without seriously thinking on the shortness of life, on the certainty of thy approaching death, and on the eternity of bliss or of woe which awaits thee after death. *Memorare novissima tua*—Eccl. vii. 40—Remember thy last end.

THURSDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem . . . surgite, eamus hinc.—Joan. xiv. 31.

That the world may know that I love the Father . . . arise, let us go hence.

I. CONSIDER that the occasion on which Jesus addressed these words to His disciples was when the time had come for Him to go to the Garden of Gethsemani, there to begin His painful Passion: *Ut cognoscat mundus quia diligo Patrem . . . surgite, eamus hinc*; that is to say, in order that it may be clear to all men that I love My divine Father with all My heart, let us be off at once, and put into execution what He has enjoined Me: *Surgite, eamus hinc*—giving us clearly to understand that the love of God does not consist in tenderness and tears, but in readily and cheerfully encountering trials, disgrace, and crosses for His glory. Wouldst thou know if thou really lovest thy God? see what is thy readiness in fulfilling the more displeasing injunctions He gives thee through thy superiors and thy rules; and when any opportunity presents itself of undertaking any laborious work for

God's glory, or of enduring any bodily ailing or any loss of thy good name, learn to encourage thyself, saying, I am determined to meet this trial, or undertake this work cheerfully: *Ut cognoscat mundus, quia diligo Patrem*—that the world may know that I love the Father. In this way thou mayest have the certainty of loving God.

II. Consider how, before starting for the garden, Christ foretold the Apostles the scandal they would take at His sufferings: *Omnes vos scandalum patiemini in Me in nocte ista*—Matth. xxvi. 31—*All you shall be scandalised in Me this night.* He said this especially to Peter, who with greater earnestness than the rest declared himself most ready and willing to follow Him through tortures and death itself: *Domine, tecum paratus sum in carcerem et in mortem ire*—Luc. xxii. 33—*Lord, I am ready to go with Thee into prison and to death.* And notwithstanding that Our Lord foretold to him that he would not only forsake Him but deny Him three several times, he preferred placing greater trust in his own fervour than in the word of his divine Master. He had indeed done well if he had not trusted so much to his own resolutions—resolutions, too, that seemed warranted both by the fervour of his prayer and the praiseworthiness of the occasion. When at times thou feelest in thy heart an earnest longing to keep Jesus company on Calvary during these holy days of Lent, beg Him most humbly and warmly to give thee the grace of being faithful to Him, and admit the sad truth that without His aid thou wilt be sure to abandon Him even more disgracefully than Peter.

III. Consider what Our Lord subjoined to Peter and his companions: *Ecce Satan expetivit vos ut cribraret sicut triticum*—Luc. xxii. 31—*Behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat*; that is to say, in order to make them forsake Him at the time of

His passion. The same thing does the devil strive to effect in our regard : he is never busier in endeavouring to withdraw us from virtue and lead us into evil, than when he sees us anxious and willing to suffer much for God. Wherefore, instead of placing an overgreat assurance and trust in thy good desires, apply thyself with greater earnestness to prayer, and commend thyself most humbly to thy Lord, as He Himself recommended His Apostles to do : *Orate, ne intretis in tentationem*—Luc. xxii. 46—*Pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*

FRIDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Cœpit contristari et mœstus esse.—Matth. xxvi. 37.
He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad.

I. CONSIDER that for no one thing did Jesus show a greater yearning than to drink the chalice of His passion : *Baptismo habeo baptizari, et quomodo coarctor, usque dum perficiatur !*—Luc. xii. 50—*I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished !* And yet, notwithstanding, when the time for suffering drew nigh, He was overwhelmed in the garden by violent fear, dread, weariness, and sadness. And why all this ? Jesus could have kept far away from Himself all these distressing mental sufferings, and have met death cheerfully—more so even than those martyrs who smiled in the midst of their torments. But no ; He wished to suffer this terrible struggle as a lesson for us, and for our good : thus teaching us how it is quite possible that there may exist in our breast a great turmoil of passion in our inferior nature, and at the selfsame time sterling virtue may reign supreme in our superior faculties.

Thou feelest a great desire to perform some act of obedience, charity, or other virtue : but as soon as thou seest thyself overtaken by a feeling of disrelish towards this act of virtue, thou growest faint-hearted, and seemest to thyself to have lost all the merit of the good desire thou hadst conceived. But this is not the case ; on the contrary, this is just the very time to practise a high degree of virtue : because virtue does not consist in having all thy passions at rest, it consists in the firm determination of the will, and in keeping down the workings of our ill-born nature. Look how Jesus encourages thee to overcome thyself by His own example ! Never was any man buffeted by such boisterous heaving of his passions as Jesus experienced and overcame before going to encounter the death of the cross for thy sake. Is not this enough to give thee courage to overcome the backwardness of thy unruly nature ? the more so that by putting up with these mental sufferings Jesus has merited especial helps to enable thee to come out victorious from this internal war. When, therefore, thou feelest thyself assaulted by thy unruly appetites, think straightway of Jesus' struggle in the garden, in order to learn how to fight after the example of thy leader, and in this way thou art sure of victory.

II. Consider that whilst Jesus is weighed down by His emotions, He has recourse to His Father, entreating Him, as He lies stretched on the ground, for relief and comfort : not as if He could not, if He chose, free Himself from this interior anguish, but to teach thee to Whom thou must have recourse, to be able to bear up against the assaults of thy passions. Under the influence of those fits of melancholy and sadness thou wilt not, perhaps, be able to make fervent prayer, nor beg Almighty God for help with great interior devotion ; but this matters not. Jesus also, during the three hours that He begged and be-

sought His heavenly Father, made no other prayer than repeating over and over again : *Transeat a me calix iste : verumtamen non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu*—Matth. xxvi. 39—*If it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.* Oh, if thou didst but know how powerful and meritorious is the recourse that is made to God with humility and resignation in the midst of interior bitterness, thou wouldst be more anxious to spend one half-hour of prayer in spiritual dryness than hours and hours amidst spiritual consolations.

III. Consider how at the very height of His interior bitterness our good Jesus did not forget His disciples nor omit to warn them of their danger, rebuke them for their drowsiness, and call upon them to pray. When thou art troubled by any passion, thou at once neglectest what is entrusted to thy charge, and leavest off prayers and other virtuous exercises. And yet then precisely is the time to perform thy actions with more merit and greater virtue. When thou performest good works amid consolation thou pleasest thyself; but when thou performest them in spite of vexation and discomfort thou pleasest God by practising virtue in a higher degree.

SATURDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY,

Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem.—Marc. xiv. 34.
My soul is sorrowful even unto death.

I. CONSIDER three of the chief causes of the interior anguish of Jesus in the garden. The first was the sight of all the pain and agony, all the abuse and in-

sults He had to suffer in His approaching passion and death, crowded and thronged as it were together, so as to be able to behold them at a single glance. On the other hand, well aware of His own infinite dignity and of the value of His divine life, a single moment of which was worth more than the lives of all possible creatures, the inferior faculties of His human nature, deprived as they were of every consolation, could not, in the natural order of things, but be seized by a lively horror and plunged into a sea of unutterable anguish. At the sight of Jesus overwhelmed by such an agony for love of thee, canst thou refrain from expressing thy sympathy for Him with real affection and tenderness? At any rate, thank Him for having on thy account undergone so much interior suffering, and never let those interior trials which thou hast to put up with from time to time in His service, appear to thee unbearable.

II. Consider the second cause of Jesus' interior agony, which was the anguish He felt at seeing in a most clear light all the heinous crimes of men against His own divine Father. A dutiful son cannot but feel deeply hurt at seeing his beloved parent wronged. But was there ever a more loving son than Jesus? As His love for His divine Father was without bounds, so also His grief at beholding Him so grossly offended by us was without bounds: the more so, that as Jesus had made Himself bail for us, He grieved over our failings as though they were His own, or as though they were laid to His charge. It was His wish, moreover, that this sorrow should be in proportion to the number and heinousness of the sins of the whole human race, and thus do away with that monstrous anomaly by which, on the one hand, Almighty God is grievously offended by all mankind, without, on the other hand, there being found a single individual in the whole world to grieve in a fitting manner over

such a host of crimes. It is not in thy reach to be ever able to abhor thy sins with the hatred and grief they deserve, because thou canst not sound the depth of their malice. Learn from Jesus how to bewail them as thou oughtest, and offer thy faulty sorrow, together with the plenary sorrow of Jesus, in atonement for them.

III. Consider the third cause of Jesus' sadness, which was the foresight of the innumerable multitude of those in whose behalf His passion and death on the cross would prove of no avail, by reason of their own malice, and also the knowledge of the great number of those in whom His sufferings would prove so inefficacious and almost fruitless, by reason of their lukewarmness and negligence in availing themselves of the many helps of grace He was about to merit for them. This heartrending thought was a cause of unmitigated sorrow, because it was not softened down by the least hope of any advantage that might accrue either to His Father's glory or our good. What share hast thou had in this agonising foresight, by thy tepidity and ingratitude? Is it possible that instead of pitying the bitter sorrow which thy Jesus suffers for thy sake in the garden, thou shouldst have the heart to increase it by thy careless and ungrateful way of living? In the same way as by thy sins thou didst add to the interior anguish of thy Redeemer in His agony, so also is it in thy power now to give Him comfort by a fervent life, and by making the merit of His sacred passion more fruitful in thy regard.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

Jesus ductus est in desertum a Spiritu, ut tentaretur a diabolo.—Matth. iv. 1.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil.

I. CONSIDER that the Spirit which urged Christ to betake Himself to the desert, where Lucifer meant to tempt Him, was the Holy Ghost, and learn hence that Almighty God oftentimes exposes good men to temptation on account of the many benefits they derive thence. In the first place, temptation makes them more humble when they see in themselves a tendency to even the ugliest vices. Secondly, temptations are the cause of their clinging more earnestly to God, being well aware that without His aid they would be sure to be worsted. Thirdly, because by manfully withstanding temptation, they practise many acts of virtue, and lay up a rich store of merit. Thou must not, therefore, be scared at thy temptations ; but thou oughtest to reflect that then is the time to fight manfully for a more honourable crown at the hands of thy Lord, Who will never fail to give thee timely helps to enable thee to overcome, if only thou on thy side fail not to do thy duty.

II. Consider how Christ prepared Himself for the fight by prayer and a rigorous fast of forty days. These are the arms with which thou must dight thyself to be able to resist the onslaught of thy enemies : first of all, fasting and mortification, to weaken the bold-faced shamelessness of thy restive flesh, which puts itself in league with the devil, and labours with him to ensnare thee. In the second place, prayer to win Almighty God over to thy side, since thou art

unable of thyself to withstand a foe who is so far superior to thee in strength. If thou only makest good use of these two means in imitation of Our Saviour, by way of preparation against temptation, and in time of temptation, thou art sure of the victory, since *Deus facienti, quod in se est, non denegat gratiam*—God never refuses His aid to those who are willing to avail themselves of it.

III. Consider the three different kinds of temptation by which Christ was assailed. The first was that of gluttony : this is oftentimes the foremost temptation for many others also ; it being the devil's aim, under pretence of health, to edge in self-indulgence—*sub umbra sanitatis, negotium voluptatis*, by a host of delicacies, which only serve to feed and foster temptations of all sorts. The second was to vainglory and pride : *Si Filius Dei es, mitte te deorsum*—*If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down*. This was the stumbling-block that caused Lucifer to fall from heaven, and Adam from the earthly paradise. And to how many religious is not the same temptation, even nowadays, the occasion of a ruinous downfall ! *Initium omnis peccati superbia*—Eccl. x. 15—*Pride is the beginning of all sin*. The third temptation was a frightful act of idolatry, the devil at the same time making Him a lying promise of the mastery of all the kingdoms of the world : *Hæc omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adoraveris me*—*All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me*. In the case of many there is, alas ! no need of such fine promises to induce them to bend their knees, and give their hearts to the devil ; he manages to get souls to turn their backs on Christ, and pander to Lucifer for a much smaller consideration. If thou desirest to be proof against these dangers, imitate the good King David, who, amidst the assaults of his enemies, narrates of Himself : *Induebam me cilicio ; et humiliabam in ieiuniis animam*

meam ; et oratio mea in sinu meo convertetur—Ps. xxxiv. 13—I was clothed with haircloth : I humbled my soul with fasting ; and my prayer shall be turned into my bosom. Above everything, never omit to faithfully discover thy temptations to thy director, for the best means of overcoming temptation, and indeed of not being liable even to temptation, is not to fight single-handed, but to have some one to guide thee.

MONDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

Apparuit illi angelus de cœlo, confortans eum ; et factus in agonia prolixius orabat ; et factus est sudor ejus, sicut guttæ sanguinis decurrentis in terram. — Luc. xxii. 43.

There appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him ; and being in an agony He prayed the longer ; and His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.

I. CONSIDER how after our heart-broken Redeemer had prayed to His Father at great length, the Archangel Gabriel, who is styled *Fortitudo Dei—the strength of God*, was sent to comfort Him. When thou hast recourse to God for relief in thy troubles, thou wonderest why thou art not heard at once. But if the Eternal Father is slow to listen to the earnest entreaties of His own beloved Son, how canst thou complain because He defers hearing thy cold and irreverent prayers ? Almighty God defers giving us His graces, not because He dislikes giving them, but in order that we may dispose ourselves to receive them in greater abundance, by our repeated acts of faith, humility, and other virtues.

II. Consider that Jesus did not derive from the Archangel any consolation or freedom, as far as regards the interior distress which He felt from the recoiling of His nature from the death of the cross ; but He was strengthened in His intellect by having set before Him the fruit that would result from His death to the glory of His Father and the welfare of mankind, and the increase of the honour of His own sacred humanity. In consequence of this encouragement His superior will showed itself more determined to face death, and His inferior faculties were still more overpowered by fear and sadness. See here the way in which Almighty God is wont to hear the prayers of those who are dear to Him ; He does not release them from the trials they are suffering, but He gives them nerve to bear up against them, and strength to overcome the repugnance they naturally feel. When thou hast an attack of any bodily or spiritual ailment, thou dost well to betake thyself to Almighty God for help ; but if instead of ridding thee of thy trial He gives thee energy to bear it with resignation and patience, so much the better for thee, for thus thou wilt become richer in merit and virtue.

III. Consider that as the flood of fear and sadness in His inferior faculties kept ever rising and swelling, Jesus was at last brought to such a pitch of anguish, that He began to suffer the agonies of death—*factus in agonia* ; and His sacred blood, which the violence of His fear had naturally caused to retire to the region of the heart, was now driven back again with supernatural violence by the fervour and love of His superior faculties, and forced to ooze from His veins and trickle down to the ground from every pore of His body : *factus est sudor ejus, sicut guttæ sanguinis decurrentis in terram* ; to such a degree did Jesus resist the natural inclinations of His inferior qualities, in order to conform Himself to the Will of His Eternal Father !

What violence hast thou hitherto done to the unruly whims of thy stubborn nature? *Nondum usque ad sanguinem restitistis, adversus peccatum repugnantes*—Heb. xii. 4—*You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.* With this blood shed through the intensity of His love, Jesus has made for thee a life-giving bath, wherein thou mayest wash away thy sins, and be able to form a more lively idea of their heinousness. At the last supper S. Peter marvelled much at the sight of his divine Master on His knees before him, in the act of cleansing his disciples' soiled feet in a bowl of water. And art not thou in thy turn awe-stricken, at beholding Jesus stretched on the ground, on the point of breathing His last, and shedding streams of blood from every limb, in order to cleanse thee from the stains of thy sins? Strive at least now to grasp the extent of the love Jesus bears towards thee, and at the same time to fathom the depth of thy own crimes, to blot out which He shed so much blood.

TUESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

Judas, unus de duodecim, accedens ad eum osculatus est eum. Dixitque illi Jesus: Amice, ad quid venisti? Osculo Filium hominis tradis?—Matth. xxvi. 49; Luc. xxii. 48.

Judas, one of the twelve, coming to Jesus, kissed Him. And Jesus said to him: Friend, whereto art thou come? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?

I. CONSIDER the depth of wickedness into which the Apostle Judas fell. It was not enough for him to plot against the life of his divine Master, and to sell His blood for a little money, but he must needs put him-

self at the head of a mob composed of the offscourings of the lowest rabble, and betray Him into their hands with a smile on his lips, with the emblem of peace, with the greeting of a friend ! And yet such was the downfall of one who was amongst Jesus' bosom disciples, and an apostle who had worked miracles. All this came about through allowing himself to be mastered at the beginning of his career by a spirit of covetousness : committing petty thefts from the alms which were entrusted by Our Lord to his care, and which belonged to all in common, in order to bestow them on his own relations. Guilt like to that of Judas is not unrarely incurred by such religious as allow themselves to be carried away by some violent burst of passion, and then fearlessly approach with poisoned hearts to receive the sacraments, and give a traitorous kiss to Jesus. Thou art not proof against this danger : keep, therefore, a careful watch over thy passions, fear thy own self, and cast thyself into the hands of Almighty God's boundless goodness with all the earnestness of thy heart.

II. Consider that although Jesus could well read the deceit of Judas' treacherous heart, He goes forward to meet him with a bright countenance, He embraces him, receives the mock kiss of peace, and gives him the beautiful name of friend : *Amice, ad quid venisti ?—Friend, whereto art thou come ?* Now, if Jesus treats a traitor who comes to murder Him with so much love, with how much more reason may not a sorrowing sinner hope to be lovingly received to the kiss of peace, who comes to the feet of Jesus full of sorrow for his sins, in order to be restored to grace. From the meekness shown by Our Lord towards Judas learn never to refuse to show those acts of loving-kindness to which those are entitled who have been the cause of some displeasure in thy regard. Oh, what a sad sight it is to behold those who profess

evangelical perfection discard for every little offence, not only the tokens of a special love, which are of counsel, but even those acts of common courtesy which are of obligation ! What a contrast between this conduct and that of Christ ! in the one case, the traitor Judas is treated as a friend ; in the other, a friend and brother is treated as a traitor. Examine thyself well as to thy behaviour towards those who have annoyed thee, for trials and vexations are not wanting in religious communities.

III. Consider that although the refined kindness of Jesus was not enough to soften the heart of Judas, He nevertheless could not refrain from letting him know the heinousness of his crime in a few short words, saying : *Ad quid venisti ? Osculo Filium hominis tradis ?—Whereto art thou come ? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss ?—Art thou not afraid to betray thy Master, thy Redeemer, thy God, with a mock kiss of peace ?—Thus did Jesus try every means to hinder that guilty soul from falling into that last and lowest abyss of crime—despair ; for true and real charity makes use of every possible means to remedy even the most hopeless evils of our neighbour. And yet even these two extremes of love and fear are not enough to make any impression on the heart of Judas, hardened as it is by the spirit of covetousness : so much so, that when the soldiers fall to the ground pale and trembling, he alone is proof against fear, and relents not, but scorns alike gentleness, threats, and miracles. It was only by slow degrees that Judas arrived at such a degree of blindness and hardness of heart ; it was by dint of his continual thefts from the alms handed over to him. Learn hence to withstand thy passions at their very first appearance, if thou wouldst not fall into a like precipice.*

WEDNESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

Ut dixit eis Jesus, Ego sum, abierunt retrorsum.—Joan. xviii. 6. *Sed hæc est hora vestra, et potestas tenebrarum.*—Luc. xxii. 53.

As soon as He had said to them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

I. CONSIDER how when Jesus went and met the armed soldiers He said to them, *Ego sum*—*It is I*. At these simple words they all fell flat to the ground from sheer fright. Our Redeemer wished in this way to give them a proof of His superhuman power and of His divinity, in order that they might understand the heinousness of the crime they were about to perpetrate in seizing Him. Oh, if thou only knewest Who it is against whom thou takest up arms whenever thou offerest thy Lord any insult, thou wouldst straightway fall trembling to the earth! Beseech Him, therefore, that when thou art tempted to do Him any wrong He would enlighten thee, and enable thee to know that He is thy God and Creator, thy Redeemer and Judge, and remember what dreadful fear thou wilt experience on thy deathbed, and in the valley of Josaphat, on hearing the dreadful sentence come from His lips against the guilty.

II. Consider how when through the goodness of Our Lord they rose from the ground, He said to them : *Hæc est hora vestra, et potestas tenebrarum*—*this is your hour, and the power of darkness*; as much as to say, hitherto you have not been allowed to offer Me any injury, because My time for suffering was not then come, but now I give you, and in you hell itself, full

liberty to do your worst against Me; thus giving to understand that whatever suffering He endured, it was not owing to the violence of His persecutors, but was the effect of His own free choice, by giving Himself up into the hands of His enemies, the Jews, in order to rescue us from the clutch of our hellish foes. But if Jesus gave Himself up for love of thee without reserve into the hands of His enemies to be torn and crucified, wilt not thou make up thy mind once for all to place thyself for love of Jesus, without reserve, into the hands of His loving providence, and allow Him to have full power over thee in everything for the accomplishment of His goodwill?

III. Consider how by virtue of this permission those unawed ruffians rushed upon Jesus like so many furious dogs, and bound Him with ropes and chains, knocking Him down and kicking Him as though He were a beast of burden, dragging Him through the public streets of Jerusalem, with pushes and blows, with hisses and insults. See what thou hast done to the Son of God by thy sins: thou hast ill-treated and trampled under foot the divine person of Jesus: *Filium Dei conculcasti*, says S. Paul. In atonement for these wrongs, beware of ever thinking that the obligation of thy rules binds thee too tightly, and that the charges placed upon thee by obedience are too burdensome, seeing that the treatment Jesus had to put up with, on account of thy sins, was so far worse than any that will ever fall to thy lot.

THURSDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

Adduxerunt eum ad Annam . . . Pontifex interrogavit Jesum de discipulis et doctrina ejus . . . Unus ministrorum dedit alapam Jesu.—Joan. xviii.

They led Him away to Annas. . . . The high-priest asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine . . . One of the servants gave Jesus a blow.

I. CONSIDER how Jesus, the supreme Judge of the living and the dead, presents Himself like a criminal before the court of Annas, who haughtily examines and cross-questions Him about His disciples and His doctrine. Whilst Jesus stands there a picture of modesty and humility, disgraced in the eyes of all, with a rope round His neck, and His hands fastened behind His back, He answers the questions put to Him about His teaching, but not those about His followers, because He could not say anything in their favour, and He did not wish to say any evil of them, particularly of Judas, who was there present. This is the rule Our Lord teaches thee by His own example : not to speak at all of thy neighbour when thou dost not know or art not able to say anything in his favour. But how often hast thou acted in opposition to this beautiful rule, speaking over and over again of the faults of thy neighbour, especially of such as have offended thee ! Remember what S. James says, that he is not a real religious who knows not how to bridle his tongue.

II. Consider how appropriate and prudent was the answer that Jesus gave the high-priest regarding His teaching, telling him that as it had always been His custom to speak and teach in public, he might easily inform himself from any one : *Interroga eos qui me audierunt.* On the other hand, reflect how unjust and

cruel was the blow that the ruffian dealt on Jesus' sweet face, with his clenched fist, and so heavily that it bruised and covered with blood that divine countenance on which the angels longingly gaze: *In quem desiderant angeli prospicere*—1 Pet. i. 12. It was a miracle of Jesus' patience that the whole of creation did not rise up against that wretch to avenge the injury done to their common Lord. Wilt thou, with this bright example of patience before thee, refuse to bear patiently a sharp remark, an injurious word, or an insult, without giving way to anger and seeking revenge?

III. Consider how Jesus, Who had held His peace amidst accusations, injuries, and so many other sufferings, opened His mouth only when He received the blow and made a modest reply in His own defence: *Si male locutus sum, testimonium perhibe de malo; si autem bene, cur me cædis?*—*If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why striketh thou Me?* For two reasons did Jesus speak. First of all, to show that His answer was in nowise wanting in respect to the high-priest, and to teach every one what respect is due to those in authority, especially ecclesiastical dignitaries. The second reason was, to show His zeal in maintaining and defending the truth of the heavenly doctrine He had taught. He holds His peace, therefore, amidst insults and bruises, and speaks only in defence of His teaching: *Sicut ovis tacebat, sicut pastor docebat*, says S. Augustine, in order that God's honour and the spiritual advantage of others might not suffer any damage from His silence. But thou dost just the contrary: thou art keenly alive to thy own injuries, and little or not at all to the offence of Almighty God and the losses of thy neighbour.

FRIDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

Petrus autem a longe secutus est eum usque ad atrium pontificis, et sedebat cum ministris ad ignem.—Marc. xiv. 54.

And Peter followed Him from afar off even into the court of the high-priest, and he sat with the servants at the fire.

I. CONSIDER what were the causes of Peter's fall. Firstly, *sequebatur a longe*—he followed from afar: the love he bore his divine Master had cooled, and his desire of dying with Him had waned; and hence he was fear-stricken at beholding the ill-treatment Jesus met with in the court. Just such is the beginning of the ruinous downfall of many a religious who once on a time was full of fervour. They begin by growing cold in their exercises of piety, and in regular observance, by neglecting prayer and mortification, by making little or no account of venial sins, thus going farther away from God in heart and mind day after day. Hence it comes to pass that they feel the burdens which the religious life necessarily entails daily grow more and more irksome, and every humiliation more and more difficult to put up with.

II. Consider the second cause of this fall, which was the self-confidence he showed, and the little heed he paid to the warnings of his divine Master in going into the court of the high-priest without the slightest misgiving, and entering into conversation with those evil-minded servants, idly sitting himself down at their fireside. Such were the false steps which, one by one, brought S. Peter to so pitiable a downfall. The first was in not taking to heart the warning given him by Our Lord, but trusting in himself. The second in

mixing too freely in a circle of servant-men and maids. The third, idle talk amongst wicked company. These also are stumblingblocks which bring many a religious to a sad downfall. And here remark the difference between fervent and tepid souls. The fervent are afraid of themselves, fly the occasions of sin, avoid idling away their time, and, on the other hand, keep themselves recollected and occupied in holy employments. The tepid and negligent, on the contrary, trust confidently in themselves, have no fear whatever of falling into sin, put themselves into danger, and spend whole days in idle talk and worldly conversation. To which of these two classes dost thou belong?

III. Consider what a disastrous fall was this of the Apostle Peter. He who in the garden had the courage to defend his Master against a whole troop of armed men, and cut off Malchus' ear with his sword, here in the servants' hall is out of himself with fear at the voice of a talkative servant-maid, who discovers him to be a disciple of Jesus, and flatly denies having ever known Him—*Non novi hominem*; on being asked a second time, he disowns Him with an oath, and the third time he accompanies his denial with swearing and cursing—*Cœpit detestari et anathematizare et jurare*. See here the chief of the Apostles and the main column of the Church in a sad plight indeed! See how all the earnest and reiterated assurances he made in the supper-room have vanished into smoke! With how much less reason, therefore, oughtest thou to trust thy own protestations made to Almighty God in time of prayer or rely on the promises made during thy retreats! Learn, rather, to be afraid of thyself, and never lean on thy own strength, as the Apostle tells us: *Cum metu et timore vestram salutem operamini*—Philipp. ii. 12—*With fear and trembling work out your salvation.*

SATURDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

Recordatus est Petrus verbi, quod dixerat ei Jesus . . . et cœpit flere.—Marc. xiv. 72.

And Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said to him . . . and he began to weep.

I. CONSIDER what a grief the fall of Peter was to Jesus, when He saw Himself ungratefully disowned under His own eyes. Poor Jesus! betrayed by Judas, forsaken by His followers, and denied by the head of the Apostles after so many promises and protests! The heart of Jesus felt this injury more keenly than any other because it came from His own favoured one. Hence thou mayest understand how much more displeasing to Our Lord are the offences of those souls towards whom He has shown Himself more than ordinarily liberal in bestowing His favours. That a man of the world should slight Him, is no great wonder; but that one who openly professes, by virtue of the religious state, to be His follower and disciple, should deny Him and pretend to know nothing about Him, oh, how far more outrageous does not the insult become in His eyes! If thou wouldst realise the enormity of thy sins, and the crying wrong they have inflicted on Jesus, reflect on the many signal blessings He has bestowed on thee in the religious state.

II. Consider what were the means by which Peter was brought to acknowledge his misdeeds and to rise from his fall. One was the crowing of the cock, the other the loving glance of Christ. The cock's crow brought back to his memory what his Master had foretold him, and his own promises made in the supper-room. The glance of Jesus gave him light to discover the heinousness of his fault and the timely aid of

divine grace to abhor it. Admire in this the merciful goodness of Christ, Who amidst His own great troubles does not forget to proffer quick and ready help to His erring disciple. But how many a time has not thy Saviour shown the selfsame mercy in thy regard when thou wast in sin! Remorse of conscience served the same end as the crowing of the cock, and that loving glance of Jesus lighted upon thee in the shape of that interior light and that pricking of conscience which He put into thy heart. Return Him thy heartfelt thanks for not having forgotten thee when thou hadst altogether forgotten Him.

III. Consider the effects of Peter's repentance. *Egressus foras flevit amare*—Matth. xxvi. 75—*Going forth he wept bitterly*. In consequence of the excessive grief that divine look had kindled in his heart, he was freed from his sin, whilst at the same time he went out of the hall where he had sinned, and betook himself to a lonely cave, there to weep over his fault in the bitterness of his soul. In fact, so long as he lived he always shed tears whenever he heard the cock crow. Learn, then, from this pattern of penance whether thou hast the signs of true repentance: namely, a horror and sorrow for sin, accompanied by tears that take their rise from a grieved heart, readiness in withdrawing thyself from the occasions which proved to be a stumblingblock to thee, and a continual remembrance of sin committed, so as ever to hate it and make worthy amends for it. See if these tokens are to be found in thy own conduct; and if they are not, beseech Jesus to give them to thee for the sake of His own tender compassion. !

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

Assumpsit Jesus Petrum et Jacobum, et Joannem fratrem ejus, et duxit eos in montem excelsum scorsum, et transfiguratus est ante eos.—Matth. xvii. 1.

Jesus taketh unto Him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain, and He was transfigured before them.

I. CONSIDER that it is a peculiar trait of Almighty God's goodness that He consoles and even bestows a foretaste of Paradise on those who give themselves up wholly and entirely to follow their Lord. It was on this account that He determined to allow Peter, James, and John, His most favoured companions, to enjoy a glimpse of Paradise in His transfiguration on Thabor. Thou art ready enough to enjoy consolation, but not to endure suffering; thou wouldst willingly be in Jesus' company amidst His triumphs, but not amidst His outrages. This is an impossibility. Look around thee, and see with thy own eyes how much a greater meed of happiness and how many more loving favours on the part of Our Lord fall to the share of those fervent religious who make it their business to mortify themselves, than are ever granted to those whose aim is the gratification of their own whims.

II. Consider that it was granted to the three Apostles to behold this marvellous transfiguration on the summit of a lofty and lonely mountain—*duxit eos in montem excelsum scorsum*—to give us to understand that spiritual sweetness and favours are not to be tasted in the glare of fame and the whirl of society; but only by those who keep their hearts disentangled from the things of the world, and soar

above the earth in spirit to treat and live with God in retirement, as David did : *Renuit consolari anima mea ; Memor fui Dei et delectatus sum*—Ps. lxxvi. 4 —*My soul refused to be comforted ; I remembered God and was delighted.* As for thee thou seekest thy consolation from creatures which engage thy heart and mind, and conversest but little with God in prayer ; thou art eaten up all thy life long by a host of earthly desires and affections : what wonder is it then if thou findest thyself bereft of those consolations which Our Lord bestows on those who retire *in montem excelsum seorsum* ? If thou wouldst climb the mount of perfection, betake thyself to the solitude of the cloister, and there treat of thy real interests with Almighty God.

III. Consider that it was but for a short time that the disciples were able to enjoy the glorious vision, because the consolations Almighty God allows His servants to enjoy are intended merely to give them fresh courage to work and labour in the attainment of the one thing necessary, and not to enable them to sit down at ease in a continual enjoyment of spiritual consolation. This present life is a time for meriting and suffering, not for repose and pleasure. Hence we may understand how it was that on Thabor, and amidst those splendours of Paradise, when Moses and Elias appeared in visible form on the mountain, they spoke of nothing else than the agonies and shame of Calvary—*loquebantur excessum*—and Peter was chid for his ardent wish to make a long sojourn on a spot where he found so much pleasure and delight. When Almighty God favours thee with any spiritual consolation, let it serve as a refreshment to enable thee to labour and do more for God. Do not expect more than a passing sun-beam, and as soon as it melts away and leaves thee in comparative darkness, be content with keeping Jesus company on Calvary, and then, indeed, thou

mayest with greater reason than Peter exclaim : *Bonum est nos hic esse*—it is good for us to be here.

MONDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

Principes sacerdotum et omne concilium quærebant falsum testimonium contra Jesum—Matth. xxvi. 59.

The chief-priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus.

I. CONSIDER how that after Jesus had been roughly and brutally led from the house of Annas to the high court of justice, presided over by Caiphas, to be there judged and condemned to death, they suborn witnesses who falsely accuse him on several heads. Our Lord makes no reply to their barefaced accusations, showing His innocence better by His silence than by self-defence. Oh holy silence ! What a reproach to thy pride which becomes so eloquent in thy own defence, not only when thou art innocent, but even when thou art guilty. Such conduct is quite contrary to that of Jesus, Who remains silent under the most grievous calumnies : *Jesus autem tacebat*.

II. Consider how on seeing that the charges of the false witnesses were entirely groundless, and that Jesus' innocence was clearly proved by His very silence, the high-priest spitefully seeks some other way of finding Him guilty. Rising, therefore, from his seat, Caiphas exclaims : *Adjuro te per Deum vivum, ut dicas nobis, si tu es Christus Filius Dei*—I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ the Son of God ; and Jesus, so mute when it was a question of warding off the foulest calumnies, becomes eloquent when He is called upon to maintain the honour of God, and those truths on which the salvation

of the whole world depends. He openly admits that He is the Messiah and the true Son of God—*Ego sum*. Yet He well knew that from this avowal of the truth they would take occasion to condemn Him to death ; but not on that account did He remain silent—wishing by His example to encourage the faithful to freely profess the truths of faith and the honour of God in the very face of their enemies, and even at the cost of their lives ; and also in order to leave no excuse for the Jews for not recognising Him as the Messiah. He then added these words : *Amodo videbitis Filium hominis sedentem a dextris virtutis Dei, et venientem in nubibus cæli*—*Hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven*. By these words He gave them to see that if in this His first coming on earth to redeem them, He appeared in the character of a culprit, He would be seen at His second coming in all His majesty as their judge. When thou feelest thyself carried away by passion, to commit some wrong or injury against the Son of God, bethink thee that He will ere long be thy judge without appeal at the hour of death, and in the valley of Josaphat ; and thus thou wilt find it much easier to curb thy evil inclinations, and show due respect to thy Saviour.

III. Consider how at this public avowal of Christ, so well in keeping with His actions and His miracles, and by which He proclaimed Himself the true Son of God, come into this world in so humble a mien to redeem us, and to come again in great glory to be our Judge, He was at once cried down by all as a wretch guilty of death, as a false and impious claimant to the Godhead. It was the pride of these Jews that hindered them from acknowledging so poor and humble a man as their Messiah. They expected him to come in glory and power. Thus it came to pass that after all the love of the Son of God in coming into this

world, to His own great abasement and discomfort, and for the express purpose of furthering our welfare, instead of being greeted with all possible love and honour, He only met with hatred and scorn, which ended by His being impiously condemned to death. How many, alas ! there are in this world who renew this black ingratitude by refusing to recognise Christ as their Redeemer and King—simply because they behold Him humble and nailed to the cross on Calvary ! Would to God that in the cloister, at least, such a fatal error should never be admitted ! In order not to be reckoned amongst the number of these thankless souls, do thou openly acknowledge and adore Jesus crucified as thy God and thy Redeemer ; and say to Him—from the very depth of thy heart : *quanto pro me vilior, tanto mihi carior*—the depth of Thy humiliation shall be the measure of my love !

TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

Tunc expuerunt in faciem ejus, et colaphis eum ceciderunt, alii autem palmas in faciem ejus dederunt—Matth. xxvi. 67.

Then did they spit in His face, and buffet Him ; and others struck His face with the palms of their hands.

I. CONSIDER how on Jesus being declared guilty at the high-priest's tribunal, that villainous mob of servants and attendants took upon themselves to blindfold Him and offer Him every kind of wanton affront the whole of that night, notwithstanding His weakness and exhaustion, in consequence of His agony and bloody sweat. Admire the patience of Jesus, become now a butt of the insults of a pack of ruffians, who

had neither the authority nor the approval of the law to illtreat Him : and, forsooth ! what tribunal in the world ever gave power to a troop of menials to outrage, at pleasure, even the vilest of criminals ? As for thee, thou canst hardly put up with even those mortifications to which thou art justly liable for thy failings at the hands of those who have all the right to inflict them ; and with what bad grace dost thou brook other little annoyances, whether by word or deed, which thou meetest with at the hands of others, who have no authority over thee ; so much so, indeed, that thou straightway waxest wrath and showest thy spleen, even by taking revenge : yet this is precisely the time which of all others might be the most profitable and advantageous for thee. When thou takest in good part the deserved mortification of thy elders, thou payest a debt ; when thou puttest up with an undeserved mortification, thou makest a positive gain and enrichest thyself with merits and rewards.

II. Consider the wantonness of the insults which were offered to our Lord during that dreadful night. They spat in His face, and besmeared with filth that countenance—*in quem desiderant angeli prospicere*—1 Pet. i. 12.—on which the angels long to gaze. They blindfolded him, and with a storm of cuffs and blows, which they dealt on Him one after the other, they asked Him, in order to turn him to still greater scorn, to prophesy who it was that struck Him. It was for thy sake that the Son of God lowered Himself to such a degree, and wilt not thou be willing to endure with a calm mien even a little word, a joke, a sarcasm for Jesus' sake, who, for love of thee, suffered these and still worse outrages, as the Evangelist hints, when he says : *et alia multa blasphemantes dicebant in eum*—Luc. xxii. 65—and blaspheming, many other things, they said against Him. St. Luke did not choose to relate these insults, because they were too shameful,

as was revealed to S. Bridget, and will be known only on the day of the last judgment.

III. Consider that the outrages inflicted on Jesus are the handiwork and the effect of thy sins since it was to atone for them that He submitted to such ill-treatment. It is thou who hast buffeted and struck Him, who hast spat upon Him and blindfolded Him, who hast insulted and wronged Him with thy tongue, and hands, and eyes and with thy misdeeds. Turn the tide therefore of all the wrath that thou feelest kindling in thy heart against those ribald persecutors of the Son of God—turn it against thyself and thy sins which are far more grievous and injurious to thy Lord than the insults offered Him during that dreadful night by his enemies the Jews.

WEDNESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

Adducunt Jesum in prætorium . . . et ipsi non introierunt, ne contaminarentur . . . exivit ergo Pilatus ad eos foras, et dixit: Quam accusationem affertis adversus hominem hunc?—Jo. xviii. 28.

They lead Jesus to the governor's hall . . . and they went not into the hall that they might not be defiled . . . Pilate therefore went out to them, and said: What accusation bring you against this man?

I. CONSIDER how the Jews, impatient to see Jesus condemned to die on the cross, lead Him to Pilate's hall, with a great uproar and escort of priests and commoners. But on their arrival they are scrupulous about going in lest they should incur any legal un-

cleanness and so be hindered from keeping the solemn rites of the Pasch. Mark how cautiously they act in order not to incur a slight legal irregularity, but mean, while they have no scruple with their hearts full of spleen and envy, to plot and contrive the death of the Son of God: *Excolantes culicem camelum autem glutientes.*—Matth. xxiii. 24—*They strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.* Like unto the Jews are those who do their utmost to have the appearance of religious as far as exterior observances are concerned, and keep their hearts full of worldly and disorderly sentiments of dislikes and desires of revenge. Examine awhile thy own case and see whether thy interior is in keeping with what thou professest by thy exterior; for Almighty God sees and judges according to the interior.

II. Consider that when Pilate asked the Jews, *Quam accusationem affertis adversus hominem hunc?* *What accusation bring you against this man?* They answered with pharisaical pride: *Si non esset hic malefactor, non tibi tradidissemus eum.*—*If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee.* They actually claim that their lying word should be taken as sufficient grounds for His condemnation. This is all the reward Jesus received for so many good turns done them and so many miraculous cures worked amongst that ungrateful people—to be held up and accused as an evil-doer. Take a lesson from thy Saviour to endure patiently that thy actions should at times be evilly interpreted and that thou shouldst even have to be unjustly mortified on account of them. Then again, listen to the charges brought against Jesus: He is accused of leading the people astray—He who was ever exhorting all to observe the commandments of God; of refusing to pay tribute to Cæsar—He who publicly declared *Reddite quæ sunt Cæsaris Cæsari et quæ sunt Dei Deo*—and who as a

matter of fact paid the tribute through Peter's hands:—of making Himself King—He who fled to escape the eyes of the people for fear they should wish to make Him their King. Learn hence what little heed thou oughtest to give to the evil judgments of men!

III. Consider that as Pilate saw naught in their charges but the mere spleen of the Jews, he gave orders that he should be tried at their own tribunal: *Secundum legem vestram judicate*—Judge Him according to your law. The Jews replied: *Nobis non licet interficere quemquam*.—It is not lawful for us to put any man to death, because they had power only to stone but not to crucify, and they were bent on getting Jesus condemned to the death of the cross by the Roman governor and so to procure for him a more painful and disgraceful death and at the same time to cloak their own foul injustice. Like to this is the conduct of those evil-minded individuals who through the ill-will they bear their neighbour, endeavour by their insinuations and complaints to bring him into disgrace so that he may be mortified and cast into the shade, and at the same time their own malice may remain concealed: but *Deus non irridetur*—Gal. vi. 7—God is not mocked—He sees the bottom of their hearts, and will one day unveil their malice when He thinks fit, and severely punish their subtle spleen.

THURSDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

Videns Judas, quod damnatus esset, pœnitentia ductus, retulit triginta argenteos dicens, peccavi tradens sanguinem justi.—Matth. xxvii. 2.

Judas seeing that he was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver . . . saying : I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.

I. CONSIDER how that very probably Judas in the act of betraying his divine master into the hands of the Jews through his lust for a few paltry coins, did so in the hope that Jesus would have withdrawn Himself from their power as He had done on former occasions, once when they intended to stone Him and again when they threatened to cast Him headlong from the top of the mountain. But when he saw that Our Lord had actually been condemned to death in the council hall, then it was that the heinousness of his crime flashed across his mind and he fell into despair. The devil is wont to try this stratagem very often : he manages to get his victims to shut their eyes in the heat of passion, so as not to let them be aware of the enormity of the deed and then no sooner is the crime committed than he causes them to see the heinousness of their excess in order to induce the guilty soul to despair. This is especially true at the hour of death : then it is that the devil ranges before the eyes of the dying man the countless number and the atrocity of his sins in order to throw him into despair. When therefore thou art urged by any passion to do wrong, try and reflect on the remorse and sorrow that will follow as soon as its boisterous heaving is subsided, and above all think of the anguish it will cost

thee on thy death-bed. Thus thou wilt be better on thy guard and more wary against the trickery of the devil.

II. Consider that as soon as Judas was fully aware of the nature of his misdeed, he was stung with remorse at having betrayed Jesus, and made a public avowal of his guilt to the priests—*Peccavi, tradens sanguinem justi* : he even gave them back the sacrilegious money : but instead of casting himself at the feet of Jesus who would have been only too glad to receive him into His embrace like another prodigal son, he applied to the priests who haughtily rejected him and heedlessly taunted him with his crime—*Quod ad nos ? Tu videris*—Matth. xxvii. 4—*What is that to us ? Look thou to it.* The consequence was that he fell into utter despair of ever obtaining pardon, saying with Cain in the bitterness of his heart : *Magna est iniquitas mea quam ut veniam merear*—Gen. iv. 13—*My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon.* By thus despairing of the infinite goodness of Almighty God, he committed a still greater sin in the opinion of S. Gregory, because by betraying his Master he sinned against the Son of Man, but by despairing of forgiveness he sinned against the Holy Ghost. If thou shouldst have fallen into any great excess, be sure to run to Jesus' feet and say to Him with a truly contrite heart : O most loving Jesus I have done Thee a most grievous wrong but there is one thing which would be a still more crying injury, and of which I will never be guilty, and that is to distrust Thy infinite goodness and despair of Thy boundless mercy. *In te, Domine, speravi non confundar in æternum*—Ps. lxx. 1—*In Thee, O Lord, I have hoped ; let me never be put to confusion.*

III. Consider the unhappy end of Judas : terror-stricken at his frightful misdeed, he deemed himself unworthy of living any longer hateful as he was to

God, to men and to himself. He therefore went straightway to hang himself from a tree, and with such violence did his sin-stained soul tear it away from his body that as S. Luke narrates : *Suspensus crepuit medius, et diffusa sunt omnia viscera ejus*—Act. i. 18—*Being hanged he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.* Behold Judas the Apostle, the worker of miracles ! See the result of his not having checked at the first onset an apparently trifling passion of coveteousness which by degrees induced him to purloin the alms which were the common property of all the apostles, to bestow them on his poor relatives : he ends by losing the apostleship which he shamefully threw up ; by losing his money the price of his master's betrayal, by losing his life which he himself cut short ; by losing his immortal soul, by losing his God—for ever ! Ought not this example to make thee watchful and careful to keep under those little but unruly passions of thine, which are capable of leading thee, thou knowest not where ?

FRIDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

Interrogavit eum præses dicens : Tu es rex Judæorum ? Dicit illi Jesus : tu dicis.—Matth. xxvii. 11.

The governor asked Him, saying : Art Thou the King of the Jews : Jesus saith to him thou sayest it.

I. CONSIDER how Pilate on hearing amongst the many charges brought by the Jews against Christ that He made Himself out to be the King of the Jews, questions Him on this head only as being the one most connected with his tribunal : *Tu es rex Judæorum ?—Art Thou the King of the Jews ?—Jesus*

frankly admits that He is King but of a kingdom quite different to those of this world: *Regnum meum non est de hoc mundo*—*My kingdom is not of this world*; because the being a king amongst men consists simply in commanding and being placed over other men, and in receiving tribute and homage: but the kingly power of Christ, the King of Glory, consists in drawing to Himself the hearts of men by the bonds of love and in making them pay the tribute of their affections, and afterwards raising them to be coheirs of His kingdom. Oh what a great King, what a worthy monarch is Jesus. Thou, in thy character of Christian, and much more as a religious, art a vassal of Jesus. Take thy oath of fealty to Him therefore, and say to Him: *Rex meus et Deus meus es tu*—Ps. xliii. 5—*Thou art my King and my God*. If in the past thou hast been wanting in thy duty begin now at least to obey and serve no other than Him. And when thou art tempted to serve any other than Christ say: Jesus only is my liege King Him only do I serve, nor am I anxious to procure any other advantages than those he holds out to me in His own bright kingdom.

II. Consider how on Pilate's replying, *Ergo rex es tu?*—*Art Thou then a king?* Jesus answered, I am a king, as thou sayest: but not of this world, whither I came to teach all men how to disenthral themselves from the bondage of sin, and win for themselves the kingdom of heaven. Pilate said nothing on hearing this doctrine, but turned round and went away. How many there are who even nowadays turn a deaf ear to the teaching of Christ, and listen to the extravagant maxims of the world! What is thy behaviour in this respect? Art thou, perchance, one of those who adhere to the teaching of Christ by a lively faith, and practically make His commands the rule of their actions? or art thou, perhaps, one of those who take

as the standard of their conduct the teaching and maxims of the world?

III. Consider how although Pilate declares Jesus to be altogether innocent: *Nihil invenio causæ in hoc homine*—Luc. xxiii. 4—*I find no cause in this man*, the Jews nevertheless continue to shout and yell with greater violence than ever against Jesus' being acquitted. He nevertheless holds His peace, and does not utter a single word in self-defence, knowing that He had taken upon Himself the burden of all our guilt, and that Divine Justice had accepted His offer, and that consequently He had made Himself answerable for all our debts. Behold, then, thy sinless Jesus most unjustly arraigned before Pilate's court and most justly condemned at the tribunal of God, inasmuch as the claims of His infinite justice could never have been fully satisfied for our exceeding debts except by means of the death of a guiltless mediator, who should be both man and God. Wilt thou not at length open thy eyes to the crying heinousness of thy sins, which have so provoked His holy justice as to make Him condemn His own innocent Son to die in atonement for them.

SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

Pilatus remisit eum ad Herodam . . . sprexit autem illum Herodes.—Luc. xxiii. 7, 11.

Pilate sent Him away to Herod . . . and Herod with his army set Him at naught.

I. CONSIDER how on account of the knowledge Pilate had of the innocence of Jesus and the jealousy of the

Jews, he adopted the plan of referring the trial to Herod's court, so as not to be forced either to condemn an innocent man to death or else to stir up the ill-will of the whole people against himself. But Pilate certainly committed a grievous sin in acting thus ; because it is not enough for a judge merely to abstain from condemning the innocent, but he is bound to defend him. This is exactly the line of conduct followed by many who have their own interests more at heart than those of Almighty God and of justice : they try to devise some means of pleasing both God and man, of combining the maxims of the gospel and of the world. But in this they cannot succeed : for it is not enough merely to refrain from doing what is wrong, it is, moreover, needful to perform the good to which each one is bound by reason of his particular state or office. How many are damned in hell for sins of omission, on account of their having failed to do the good or hinder the evil which their charge demanded of them ! Reflect seriously on the obligations of thy state, and remember that sins of omission are like those sunken rocks, on which it is the easier for a vessel to founder because they are the less noticeable.

II. Consider that Herod, who had been so long anxious to see Jesus, received Him with a show of kindness, and made great promises if only He would work some miracle in his presence. But Jesus neither chose to work any miracle to pander to the curiosity and pleasure of an incestuous king, nor deigned to give any answer to his queries : nay, He would not even defend Himself against the accusations of His enemies, in order to ward off the death-warrant they sought to obtain against Him. Learn a lesson from this : if Christ did not wish to work wonders nor to answer a single word to the questions of an individual, whose object was not to obtain information that would aid him to mend his life, but simply

to satisfy curiosity, much less will He condescend to speak interiorly to thee and confer His favours on thee, if thou goest to prayer or spiritual reading through motives of curiosity and self-satisfaction rather than of piety and a desire of deriving benefit. Take notice also how in not choosing to work any miracle to satisfy Herod's curiosity, Our Lord really did in this very way work a great miracle—a miracle of His meekness and untired patience in holding His peace amidst the lying accusations of the Jews and the numberless taunts of Herod's men, who declared Him to be and treated Him as, a fool. Learn, therefore, for the love of Jesus to remain silent, and to bear patiently the accusations and scoffs to which thou mayest at times be subjected through no fault of thine—and in this way thou wilt be working a great miracle.

III. Consider how after Jesus had been turned to scorn as an idiot by Herod and his court, He was sent back again to Pilate dressed in a white garment to disgrace Him and turn Him into ridicule. See how the innocence and wisdom of thy Lord is despised and deemed folly. So also at the present day the innocence and simplicity of the upright are the talk and laughing-stock of men of the world: *Deridetur justi simplicitas*—Job xii. 4—*The simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn*. Such is the ordinary course of things; but the wisdom of the world is foolishness before Almighty God: *Stultitia apud Deum*—1 Cor. iii. 19. So in like manner the hope of a better world is looked upon by infidels as infatuation. If, therefore, thou wouldst wear the white robe of innocence, hold the foolish wisdom of this world in utter abhorrence, and love to be deemed a fool by the wise ones of the present age, so as to be likened to the example of Christ, the eternal and uncreated Wisdom.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

Erat Jesus ejiciens demonium, et illud erat mutum.—
 Luc. xi. 14.

Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb.

I. CONSIDER in the person of the poor dumb and possessed man of this day's gospel, how many there are in the world even now who are taken possession of by dumb devils. Such is the condition, in the first place, of all those who conceal in confession their more shameful sins, which, however, they had no shame in committing, or do not mention such aggravating circumstances as ought to be disclosed. Secondly, all those who are silent with their spiritual directors on the subject of their temptations, which would cease if they did but speak. Thirdly, all those who neglect to warn or correct those who are under them or in any way come under their charge. Fourthly, all those who take no pains to inform the superior of any disorders or scandals existing in their own community, so that a timely remedy may be applied. Lastly, all those who fail to have recourse to Our Lord and beg His help in their needs. Think a little, and see if some one of these dumb devils have not taken possession of thee: and if so, beg thy Lord—but beg Him earnestly—to free thee from it.

II. Consider that when the crowd beheld the demon constrained by Our Lord to leave his victim, they immediately began to praise and admire Him—*admiratae sunt turbæ*. The envious Pharisees, on the contrary, take thence an occasion for criticising and condemning Him, saying that our Divine Redeemer cast out devils by virtue of some secret understanding with, and help from, the prince of devils—in *Beelzebub principe dæmo-*

niorum ejicit dæmonia. Hence the self-same miracle is loudly praised by the good, and sneeringly found fault with by the wicked, who by reason of their envy and spleen can only, like adders, extract evil from good. Oh how often this comes to pass in religious communities! where virtue is praised by the good—to whom the good example of their more fervent brethren serves as a stimulus to make them imitate what they admire; and where also those, who are jealous and less observant, are engaged only in condemning other people's defects, and even their virtues, without striving to avoid the one, or practise the other. Strive for thy part to be of the number of the former, rather than of the latter.

III. Consider that although Christ saw Himself so harshly condemned by the Pharisees, and treated by them as a wizard, He neither takes offence, nor gets angry, nor answers sharply—as thou dost at every little word said to thee; but by his matchless meekness he gave them to see that He worked miracles by a Divine power only, and that a favourable opportunity had come for winning for themselves the kingdom of heaven, by means of His own presence amongst them: *Profecto pervenit in vos regnum Dei—Doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you*; since He had come visibly on earth to free them from the thralldom of the devil, and make them heirs of Paradise. Each time that thou receivest holy communion, imagine that to thee also are addressed the words; *Pervenit in te regnum Dei—the kingdom of God is come upon thee*; and take care to avail thyself to thy own profit, of a time that is so precious, on account of the real presence of Christ within thy breast.

MONDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

Quem vultis vobis dimittam Barabbam an Jesum—
Matth. xxvii. 21.

*Whether will you of the two to be released unto you,
Barabbas or Jesus?*

I. CONSIDER that as Pilate's plan of referring Jesus' trial to Herod, had not turned out according to his expectations, he tries now to set Him at liberty on the occasion of the Easter festivals, at which time he was wont to set a prisoner at liberty, at the request of the people. He proposes, therefore, two for the people to choose between—one by name Barabbas, who was a murderer, robber, and felon, and Jesus as the second; and he asked the question: *Quem vultis vobis dimittam—whether will you of the two to be released unto you?* Consider here the grievous wrong that Pilate does Jesus; for after he had declared Him innocent, he sets him on an equal footing with a most villainous wretch. But how far more unbearable was the injustice of the Pharisees, who stirred up the people to demand mercy in favour of Barabbas in preference to Jesus? Reflect awhile how bitter such an affront must have been to the heart of thy Saviour. So also within the range of thy own community it may at times happen, that thou feelest a certain displeasure, because thou hast no influential friend to further thy interests and back thee up, or at seeing some one of thy brethren whom thou deemest thy inferior, preferred to some post of superiority, or to some office. On such occasions bethink thee of Jesus forsaken for love of thee by his own chosen people, and rejected by them by their choice of Barabbas: in this way thou wilt learn to put up with any injury for love of Jesus.

II. Consider that the people, not content with asking Pilate to give Barabbas his freedom, demand with one and the same breath, that he should condemn Jesus to the death of the cross. See here a sample of what the judgments of men are when they are actuated by passion. They wish that life should be spared to a culprit worthy of death, and that the death of the cross should be the lot of an innocent man, deserving of everybody's esteem and good will. But how many there are, who on having to choose between some trifling advantage, and the infinite good of God's grace, are willing, at the instigation of their passions, and of the devil, rather to lose the grace of God than forego the shadow of a good which is fled in a moment, and so they come in reality to condemn Jesus afresh to the death of the cross: *Rursus crucifigentes sibimetipsis filium Dei*—Heb. vi. 6—*Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God.*

III. Consider that Pilate was astonished at the demand of the people, for he had no insight into the mysteries of Providence; and in the decrees of Providence it was arranged that the voice of the people should condemn the innocent Jesus, and be the cause of acquitting guilty mankind, so that at one and the same time the divine justice should receive full atonement for the sins of mankind by Jesus' death, and the divine attribute of mercy be equally exercised by freeing mankind from eternal death. At this spectacle of the Eternal Father handing over His own divine Son to death, to free thee from eternal death, how canst thou refrain from exclaiming: *Misericordias Domini, in æternum cantabo!*—Ps. lxxxviii. 1—*The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever.*

TUESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

Nullam causam invenio in homine isto emendatum ergo illum dimittam—Luc. xxiii. 14, 16.

I find no cause in this man I will chastise Him therefore and release Him.

I. CONSIDER the injustice of Pilate who declares Christ to be innocent, and at the same time sentences Him to be scourged, hoping in this way to allay the fury of the people, but who were incited to overbearing insolence by reason of the excessive timidity of the judge in hesitating to defend and acquit one whom he knew to be innocent. Learn hence to beware of ever showing cowardice in resisting the mad whims of thy boisterous passions, otherwise they will cause thee to fall into vice, almost against thy own will. It behoves thee to offer them a firm and genuine resistance from the very beginning. Pilate came to the determination of condemning Christ to be scourged, on purpose to avoid condemning Him to death, as the people wished, and then after all he sentenced Him to die on the cross to satisfy the people's demands. So also many souls allow themselves to be dragged on by their passions to scourge Christ by their venial sins; but they are sure to end by crucifying Him by mortal sin.

II. Consider the outward shame that Jesus experienced in this scourging, forasmuch as he was stripped quite naked under the gaze of so large a crowd, and subjected to the ribaldry and scoffs of all that coarse rabble. All the while Jesus was thus exposed he felt far more keenly the pain and the shame which the glances and lewd words of those shameless ruffians caused Him, than all the lashes of the scourges, as He Himself sorrowfully complained, saying to His Eternal

Father : *Tu scis improprium meum et confusionem meam*—Ps. lxxviii. 20—*Thou knowest my reproach, and my confusion, and my shame.* Thus naked they bind Him to a pillar, with His arms raised, so that every inch of His sacred body should be exposed, not less to the stripes of the thongs, than to the gaze of the lookers-on. In this guise did Jesus will to take on Himself the shame which thy sins have deserved, and at the same time to win for thee, by His own merits, the beautiful wedding-garment of grace.

III. Consider the agony of this scourging, on account of the extreme tenderness of His body, on account of the ferocity of the gaolers, who were goaded on by a fiendish frenzy, and by the Jews, who hoped to see Him expire under their blows; on account, again, of the number of stripes—several thousand and more—and, lastly, on account of the instruments they made use of, which were hard thongs, knotted rods, and pliant cords loaded with star-shaped studs; so that in consequence, His divine body was bruised and wounded to the bone in every member and limb, with streams of blood trickling down from all sides. At such a frightful spectacle canst thou help being moved to compassion, and not experience some feeling of pity? Behold how dearly those gratifications of the flesh in which thou hast indulged against the will of Almighty God, have cost Jesus! Hast thou the heart to go on adding wound after wound by fresh sins? Hast thou the heart, at the sight of so many wounds, and so much blood, which Jesus sheds on thy account, to lend thyself to the lusts of thy rebellious flesh, and to purchase pleasure for thy treacherous senses, by reopening thy Saviour's sores and gashes: *Supra dorsum meum fabricaverunt peccatores, prolongaverunt iniquitatem suam*—Ps. cxxviii. 32—*The wicked have wrought upon my back; they have lengthened their iniquity.*

WEDNESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

Milites plectentes coronam de spinis imposuerunt capiti ejus, et veste purpurea circumdederunt eum.—Joan. xxi. 2.

The soldiers plaiting a crown of thorns, put it upon His head : and they put on Him a purple garment.

I. CONSIDER the diabolical invention of these heartless soldiers. There was the pain-worn Jesus drenched in His own blood, with all His limbs torn and cut—a sight that ought to have been enough to move the hardest heart to compassion. Yet, nevertheless, these savage ruffians are only bent on finding out new ways of increasing His torments. After having thus cruelly covered Him with wounds, they encircle His brow with a crown made of thorns ; they cover His person with an old tattered purple cloak, put into His hand a hollow reed for a sceptre, and offer Him mock homage as King of the Jews, turning Him into ridicule, striking Him and spitting in His face. O King of Heaven ! O glory of the Angelic choirs, to what a sad plight do I see Thee reduced ! This disgraceful treatment is a picture of the way in which he acts who praises Christ with his lips, and offends Him by his actions, and so treats Him like a mock King ; the hollow reed is an image of the works which are at times presented to Our Lord—good, indeed, outwardly, but void of all interior spirit. The crown woven from thorny rods are those wicked thoughts of haughtiness, pride and sensuality ; the purple rags are those acts of observance which are gone through anyhow. See what a return is made to Jesus for all His love !

II. Consider the frightful torture caused by this crown, woven from very sharp thorns, after the fashion of a helmet. This was pressed tightly on to His head by means of sticks and the armour-plated fists of the soldiers, so that the thorns were made to pierce right through His temples, and come out again from above His ears and eyes, covering that divine countenance, which is the delight of Paradise, with blood. A single thorn which has run into the foot of some unwary lion, is enough to make it tremble with pain, and draw from its frame a roar that deafens the stillness of the forest. And Thou, oh my Jesus ! what torture ! what agony must Thou not have endured in feeling seventy cruel thorns tearing and burying themselves in Thy head—the seat of all the nerves and senses ! My soul, see here what the soil of thy heart hath brought forth for the Son of God—although He has cultivated it regardless of toil, with countless inspirations, and so many wholesome gifts—nothing but thorns—thorns most painful and most shameful !

III. Consider the mysterious lesson Our Lord teaches us by this His painful and disgraceful crowning : it is this—that all that the world holds in esteem as most honourable—namely, the regal sceptre, purple and crown, is for Jesus a cause of shame and scorn : whereas all that the world looks upon as foolish and disgraceful, is in the eyes of Christ honourable and glorious : *Gloria et honore coronasti eum Domine*—Ps. viii. 6—*Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour*. Christ does not wish for any other diadem in this life, than a crown of prickly thorns. How then canst thou flatter thyself that thou art a member worthy of such a head, if thou leavest for Christ all the thorns, and searchest after every sort of convenience for thyself. When Our Lord left the choice to S. Catherine of Sienna, between a crown of flowers and a crown of thorns, she did not choose the flowery wreath, but

begged Our Lord to crown her with that which would make her more like unto her divine spouse. And wilt thou, who in thy character of religious oughtest to liken thyself unto Jesus in everything, wilt thou wish for a different crown to that which thy Saviour wears? If thou shrinkest from its thorns now, thou wilt feel them prick all the more painfully at the hour of death.

THURSDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

Exivit ergo Jesus portans spineam coronam et purpureum vestimentum. Et dixit eis: Ecce homo.—Joan. xix. 5.

Jesus therefore came forth bearing the crown of thorns, and the purple garment. And he saith to them: Behold the Man.

I. CONSIDER that as Pilate was desirous of saving Christ from death, on beholding Him in such a sorry plight, and so disfigured by His wounds, he thought that by showing Him to the people in this pitiable condition, their stoney hearts would be softened, and that they would be gluttoned by the shedding of so much of His divine blood. Pilate therefore brings Jesus forth into the presence of the crowd, crowned with thorns, clothed in purple and besmeared with blood, and says to the people, *Ecce homo*—*Behold the man.* Apply thy mind to contemplate Him awhile and say to thyself, *Ecce homo*—Behold that Man-God who has come to atone for my faults by His sufferings and has reduced Himself to this state for my crimes. If those gaping wounds are not enough to curb thy sensuality, those piercing thorns to humble thy pride, that overpower-

ing shame to keep under thy ambition and vanity—ah then, indeed, cry out thou also, with the inhuman Jews, if thou hast the heart to do so: *Crucifigatur—Crucify Him!*

II. Consider that thou oughtest to imagine these words—*Ecce homo*—as spoken to thyself by the mouth of the Eternal Father. Behold this man who at the same time is God born of Me *ab æterno*—from all eternity, and Who by clothing Himself with human nature has become thy surety, thy master and thy pattern of every virtue. Wherefore inasmuch as He is thy surety, learn the grievousness of thy crimes in the excess of His sufferings, and thank Him for such exceeding mercy, but for which thou wouldst have been lost for ever. As thy master hearken to what He inculcates, when He teaches that the pleasures of the flesh are like thorns that flatter the senses and wound the soul; that titles and honours are like hollow, frail reeds, which seem to promise support and to secure the possession of happiness, but quickly betray one; that riches and fine clothing are simply rags which are soon worn out and are good for nothing. Finally, inasmuch as He is thy pattern—*Inspice et fac secundum exemplar*—Exod. xxv. 40—look at Him attentively and follow His example. Learn from Jesus meekness under the wrongs that are done thee; humility under the trials and sufferings thou hast brought upon thyself by thy own sins—*Inspice et fac*.

III. Consider how, as Pilate had made up his mind not to condemn so innocent a man to death, these evil-minded Jews found out a means of ensnaring him and making him fall into this very deed of glaring injustice which he wished to avoid, by their cries of: *Si hunc dimittis, non es amicus Cæsaris*—*If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend*, and will lose his favour and become his enemy. Oh what a powerful weapon was this to frighten and browbeat the judge

and make him guilty of deicide ! Yet how many there are who at the present day are withdrawn from the path of virtue and hurled headlong into the depth of evil—even against their own wills—so to say—through fear and human respect ! Many a religious would fain uphold regular observance, withdraw himself from certain intimacies which he finds hurtful, and devote himself in greater earnest to his spiritual exercises ; but the dread caused by human respect scares him, and because he may hear some word of reproach or some joke passed on him he loses courage. In thy own case do thou therefore keep thy eyes open and learn to make more account of the honour of Almighty God than of the black looks of men.

FRIDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

Sedente Pilato pro tribunali, misit ad eum uxor ejus, dicens : Nihil tibi et justo illi.—Matth. xxvii. 19.

As Pilate was sitting in the place of judgment, his wife sent to him, saying : Have thou nothing to do with that just man.

I. CONSIDER how Pilate wishing to bring the trial to an end and pass sentence, was left in great fear and doubt how to act, from his knowledge on the one hand of the evident innocence of Jesus, and on the other because he was a witness of the uproar of the excited mob, who would for a certainty have laid a charge against him before Cæsar. In this critical juncture his wife sent to tell him on no account to allow himself to be drawn into the crime of condemning so innocent and good a man as Jesus : *Nihil tibi et justo illi*. It was the design of Providence that as the first woman

had been, by means of a fallen angel, the cause of Adam's downfall, so now a woman should, by means of a good angel, withhold Pilate from his unjust sentence ; but because he gave no heed to this especial light and help, he became all the more blameworthy. This is often the case : how often art thou tempted, either through passion, or by the devil, or from human respect, to burst out into some misdemeanour ? Our Lord meanwhile in His kindness sends thee some special interior light or sting of conscience to warn thee to resist and withdraw from the danger. If at such a moment thou yieldest to thy unruly passions and turnest a deaf ear to the warning of heaven, thou also wilt become more grievously guilty by committing a fault with thy eyes open.

II. Consider how Pilate struggling with his own conscience and the fear of the people, flattered himself on being able at one and the same time to satisfy his own conscience and the wicked designs of the Jews by making a public protestation that he had no share in Our Lord's condemnation, and he washed his hands in the presence of the people in confirmation of his own innocence : *Innocens ego sum a sanguine justi hujus*—*I am innocent of the blood of this just man* : but what was the good of washing his hands and at the same time defiling his conscience by passing sentence of death on the guiltless Jesus ? Like unto Pilate is he who in the act of sinning would nevertheless make himself out to be innocent and lay the blame on others ; so also is he who truckles to the wishes of others against his own conscience, and yields consent to their unfair demands ; and lastly, he who under the cloak of an affected show of piety endeavours to hide his interior faultiness. But how sadly do such as these deceive themselves, and with how much disgrace and shame will they be unmasked before the judgment seat of Almighty God !

III. Consider the wicked and unfair sentence of Pilate, who not only condemned the innocent Jesus to the punishment of the cross, but handed Him over to the fury of his enraged enemies to do as they willed with Him—*tradidit eum voluntati eorum*. See to what lengths Pilate came through notwithstanding the unjust demands of the people, and through the fear of losing Cæsar's favour, in all which it is clear that he aimed more at the furtherance of his own private interests than at the impartial administration of justice. But how badly all his plans succeeded ! for a charge was laid against him by those very Jews before Cæsar, he lost his favour, and died miserably. Learn from this example to fight manfully against and to resist the upheavings of thy unruly passions. Pilate began to yield by referring Jesus' trial to the courts of the priests and to Herod ; then he went further by subjecting our innocent Lord to the penalty of scourging ; and lastly, he came to condemn Him to be crucified. Take heed lest thou follow his example.

SATURDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

Exuerunt eum chlamyde, et induerunt eum vestimentis suis, et duxerunt eum ut crucifigerent.—Matth. xxvii. 31.

They took off the cloak from Him and put on Him His own garments, and led Him away to crucify Him.

I. CONSIDER the different effects that the sound of the trumpet which proclaimed Pilate's sentence wrought on the minds of those that heard it. The Pharisees and the mob are filled with joy and triumph at having obtained what had been so long disputed with them—like

all wicked people who delight in what is bad—*exultant in rebus pessimis*, without giving a thought to the terrible consequences which await them. Jesus, on the contrary, on hearing the sentence raises His mind and heart to heaven, looking upon this sentence not as the effect of the intrigues of the Jews, nor as unjust on the part of Pilate, but as having been decreed from all eternity by His Eternal Father for the salvation of mankind. Wherefore He bows His head with humble resignation, and conforms Himself most perfectly to the will of His Father. Thou also in thy own experience will oftentimes come across people who will be the occasion and perhaps the cause of many sorts of crosses and trials, even unjustly, either from anger or ill-will or revenge. But thou must learn to look not to the individual who was the immediate cause of thy disgrace or loss, but to look rather to the disposition of Almighty God Who permits it for thy own greater good, and in this way thou wilt accept thy trial with greater resignation and bear up against it patiently.

II. Consider how without losing a moment those ruffians furiously rush on Jesus and tear the tattered purple robe from His shoulders, to reclothe Him in His own garments, so that He might the better be recognised and despised by the towns-people of Jerusalem. Our Lord willed to endure this shame and confusion in atonement for that blameworthy shame thou feelest when thou blushest at openly wearing Christ's livery, at performing some act of mortification or penance in public, or at showing thyself observant of thy rules or hindering the inobservance of others. Thou professest, as a religious, to be a follower of Christ; why then be ashamed amongst seculars, or even perchance amongst those of thy own household, to do publicly what thy profession demands of thee?

III. Consider what were the feelings of Jesus on beholding the cross presented to Him by His execu-

tioners, and how with even greater tenderness than S. Andrew, He welcomes and reveres it :—*O bona crux diu desiderata, et concupiscenti animo præparata*—Oh beloved cross, so long sighed after, and which has so long provoked the cravings of an eager heart. He does not wait for it to be laid on His shoulders, but He Himself goes forward to take it; He embraces it, kisses it and presses it to His heart, well knowing that the cross is the altar on which He is going to sacrifice Himself in obedience to, and to the glory of, His heavenly Father. He knows that it is the plank of refuge He is about to hold out to us after our most disastrous shipwreck; that it is the true sign-post to eternal salvation, and the standard of certain victory over our foes. With what feelings dost thou receive the crosses that are assigned to thee? dost thou run away from them, or dost thou embrace them? It is the will of Almighty God that crosses should be wanting to no one, because without crosses there can be no hope of salvation, since they are a necessary means for entering heaven. *Oportet nos per multas tribulationes intrare in regnum Dei*—Act. xiv. 21—*Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.* But the cross itself is not enough to save us; we must have a love for the cross that Almighty God sends us in the shape of afflictions, bearing up under them with resignation, patience, and generosity, in imitation of Jesus.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

Sequebatur eum multitudo magna.—Joan. vi. 2.

A great multitude followed Him.

I. CONSIDER the perseverance with which this pious crowd of people clung to Jesus and followed Him into the desert, enticed by the sweetness of His heavenly teaching and the miraculous wonders He wrought in favour of the sick. They could not bring themselves to leave His side either for their own household affairs, or even to take necessary bodily refreshment, so much so that they followed Him for three whole days without taking any food—*Ecce jam triduo sustinent me*—They knew for a certainty that He who came to the relief of any poor sick man with so much tenderness would not fail to find those who followed Him with hearts full of trust, in what was needful for them. Art not thou confused at the example of this crowd of men, thou who so soon growest weary and tired of remaining in prayer with Jesus, and of hearing His doctrine, and who through anxiety about thy occupations or studies art so easily distracted, or even perhaps neglectest thy prayer altogether? Engrave this truth deeply in thy memory, that prayer and recourse to God is the best way to obtain that help from heaven which thou requirest to be able to fulfil all thy duties satisfactorily.

II. Consider the lovingkindness of Christ in providing for the wants of this pious crowd. The Apostles wished to send them back again to their homes to satisfy their hunger, as they could not find a sufficient quantity of refreshments in that wilderness. But Our Lord would not hear of such a thing, and He chose rather to multiply the loaves in a most marvellous

manner, and to dismiss them refreshed and satiated : to give us to understand that he who serves Almighty God, without giving even so much as a thought to himself, but leaves all to follow Christ, will always be provided for in time of need, and will be enabled to say with the Psalmist, *Dominus regit me, et nihil mihi deerit*—Ps. xxii. 1—*The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing.* The world with all its wealth can never allay the cravings of the hearts of its followers, and yet Christ is well able, notwithstanding the privations that evangelical poverty entails, to provide for the wants of the body and satisfy the desires of him who does not wish for aught, nor thinks of aught, but of how to serve Him faithfully and follow in the tracks of His footsteps.

III. Consider that Our Lord gave directions that the two fishes and the five loaves which the disciples had with them should be brought to Him wherewith He might feed the hungry throng, not indeed as though He could not do without them, but simply to give thee to understand what a source of profit to thyself anything becomes of which thou deprivest thyself for the benefit of thy neighbour. The Apostles deprived themselves of two fishes and a few loaves, in which the whole of their provision consisted, and in reward they got twelve baskets full : so thou also by giving even a glass of water to thy neighbour for God's sake, gainest a hundredfold in this life, and as it were a torrent of never-ending delight in the next. Is not this a most desirable gain, of which perhaps thou hast hitherto had little or no esteem ?

MONDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

Et bajulans sibi crucem, exivit in eum qui dicitur Calvarie locum.—Joan. xix. 17.

And bearing His own cross, He went forth to that place which is called Calvary.

I. CONSIDER that although it was not customary to make a criminal carry his own cross, which was, as a rule, kept out of sight, yet Jesus is made to see His own cross, and, although utterly exhausted, He is constrained to carry it on His shoulders, flayed as they were by the scourges, and with the crown of thorns on His head for His greater pain and shame. In this condition He starts from the prætorium for Calvary, with a crier in front to make known by sound of trumpet that He is about to be executed. He is surrounded on all sides by the executioners, who drag Him along with cords fastened round His neck and to His wrists; He is accompanied by two notorious robbers condemned like Himself to the same kind of death. Imagine that as the sad procession wends its way He turns to thee, and says: *Qui vult venire post me abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam et sequatur me.*—Matth. xvi. 24—*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.* But when indeed will thy cross ever be as painful and disgraceful as that of Jesus? And if a God, for love of thee and for thy salvation, mounts the steep of Calvary with such a burdensome cross, how canst thou refuse to follow Him and carry thy own cross, which is so much lighter, for love of Him and in atonement for thy own faults?

II. Consider how thy poor Jesus, weakened and weighed down by the heavy burden of His cross,

leaves the traces of His progress rather by His falls than His footsteps, in consequence of which His wounds are reopened and His agony renewed. At every fall He is made to rise again by dint of pushing, kicking, and pulling with the cords that bind Him, amidst the hoots, insults, and hisses of the mob. Oh, what a height of barbarity! Oh, what overwhelming shame for Jesus! And yet it is not the mere weight of the hard wood that makes thy sorrowful Saviour heave such deep groans; far more grievous to Him is the weight of all our sins, with which the Eternal Father has loaded Him, to atone for them by His sufferings: *Posuit in eo iniquitates omnium nostrum*—Is. liii. 6—*The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* It is on account of the weight of these sins, far more than of the cross, that He complains when He says: *Sicut onus grave gravatæ sunt super me*—Ps. xxxvii. 5—*As a heavy burden they are become heavy on Me.* If thou hadst found thyself present during this His journey, thou wouldst willingly have relieved thy Saviour of His burden; why, then, dost thou not relieve Him now, as thou canst truly do, by amending thy faults and sharing His sufferings?

III. Consider that as the Pharisees began to fear lest Jesus would expire before reaching the top of Calvary, where they had set their hearts on crucifying Him for His greater ignominy, they resolved to relieve Him of the weight of His cross, and make some one else carry it, following immediately behind Him—*Post Jesum.* Our Lord could well have miraculously buoyed up His failing strength, and carried His cross by Himself to the end of His journey; but He wished to shadow forth to us in a mysterious manner, that if we desire to enjoy the fruit of His cross, we also must have a share of its weight, inasmuch as the cross of Jesus is not enough to save us unless we also carry it with Jesus and after Jesus—*Post Jesum*—treading in

His footsteps, and recopying in ourselves His patience and meekness, His humility and charity. There is no one in this world who has not his cross to bear ; but there are few who bear it with Christ and for Christ.

TUESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

Excuntes invenerunt hominem . . . nomine Simonem : hunc angariaverunt ut tolleret crucem ejus.—Matth. xxvi. 32.

Going out they found a man . . . named Simon : him they forced to take up His cross.

I. CONSIDER that although the Jews wished to relieve Jesus of the weight of the cross, no one was to be found amongst the many bystanders who would of his own accord shoulder so ignominious a load—for the soldiers deemed it unbecoming to their profession, and the Jews thought that the very touch of it was an abomination : wherefore the executioners found themselves constrained to oblige a pagan foreigner, by name Simon, to carry the cross. By this fact divine Providence wished to betoken how the cross of Christ, which was so hated by the Jews, would be embraced by the Gentiles after their conversion to the faith, and in a most especial manner by the vast band of glorious martyrs who would shed their blood rather than deny it. Thou hast received the light of faith in holy baptism, and hast even had the boon of a religious vocation conferred upon thee, yet how dost thou esteem and value the cross of Christ? Dost thou come under the number of the lovers of the cross, or of its enemies,—*Quorum finis interitus*—Philip. iii. 19—*Whose end is destruction?*

II. Consider how Simon laid the cross on his shoulders through sheer necessity and with great disinclination, precisely because it went against his will and his natural inclinations ; but it is most likely that afterwards he was enlightened and strengthened by divine grace to carry it with devotion and cheerfulness, thus becoming the forerunner of all those who afterwards were to follow with generous hearts in the footsteps of Our Lord on His way to Calvary, carrying His cross on their shoulders. What befell Simon will also happen to thee. Thou wilt have a cross laid on thy shoulders, in the shape of some trial, or sickness, or office entrusted to thee by obedience, and at first thou wilt perhaps find it go against thy will and natural inclinations ; but if thou wilt resign thyself and accept it with patience, and make a virtue of necessity, thou wilt look at it in a different light, and derive spiritual consolation from the many helps of grace it will draw down upon thee, and from the peace of mind and the sure hope of reward thou wilt enjoy, so that thou wilt exclaim with the Psalmist: *Lætati sumus pro diebus . . . quibus vidimus mala* — Ps. lxxxix. 15—*We have rejoiced for the days . . . in which we have seen evils.*

III. Consider that the cross of Christ was not only a burden for Simon, but also a source of shame and infamy. And yet because Simon so abased himself as to carry the cross, see how he has become glorious before the whole world on account of the gospel narrative ! how enviable a name has he not acquired ! Many and many a time the crosses with which the present life abounds are burdensome to thee and distasteful to nature, not only, perhaps, on account of their own intrinsic grievousness, but also because it may be that they lower thee in the eyes of the world ; but be not dismayed : for if thou wilt but bear thy cross with patience it will become light, and

at the same time will become an honourable badge in the sight of all the heavenly court, and even in the eyes of the world, which, generally speaking, in the end admires and reveres him most whom it formerly most injured and scorned.

WEDNESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

Sequebatur autem illum multa turba populi et mulierum, quæ plangebant et lamentabantur illum.—Luc. xxiii. 27.

And there followed Him a great multitude of people and of women, who bewailed and lamented Him.

I. CONSIDER that a great crowd followed Jesus to Calvary: many indeed from their eagerness to torment or insult Him, others from curiosity to behold so horrible and unusual a sight; the women to express their feelings of pity by their tears, but no one at all to help or relieve Him in the midst of His pain. This is just the case with religious. Great indeed is the number of religious throughout the world, all of whom profess to follow Christ to Calvary by the observance of the evangelical counsels: but in very different ways. Many a one, it would seem, follows Him for no other purpose than to insult Him and bring disgrace on religion by his worldly and unworthy behaviour; others follow Him for human ends and interests, to better their position and lead a more comfortable life; others there are who follow Him, and content themselves with mere appearances and exterior observances, with but little or no interior spirit. But few and far between are those who give themselves up altogether to follow Him perfectly, by

copying in themselves His own most holy examples of patience and meekness, of humility and mortification, both exterior and interior. Cast a glance at thy own motives and ends, and on the manner in which thou followest thy Saviour, and see whether thou be a religious only in thy habit but not in thy manners.

II. Consider that amongst all that throng of people it was only to the women that Jesus deigned to address Himself, and that, on account of their affectionate and kind-hearted tears ; and to them He spoke these words of advice : *Filiæ Jerusalem, nolite flere super me ; sed super vos ipsas flete et super filios vestros*—Luc. xxiii. 28—*Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me ; but weep for yourselves and for your children.* He said this not as though the tears of tenderness, which are shed through compassion at His sufferings, be not good and praiseworthy—for they are a sign of a good heart—but to give us to understand that the evil He desired to be most bewailed was not His griefs, but our own sins, which were the sole cause of all His sufferings : so that He did not forbid the women to weep, but advised them to change the object of their tears, and to make them a remedy for that evil which was the cause of His shedding every drop of His precious blood. When at times thou feelest thyself moved to tender sympathy and tears, during thy meditation on the sufferings of thy Saviour, weep by all means ; but let the chief motive of thy tears be on account of thy own sins and thy own ingratitude, and in this way they will be more pleasing to thy Lord, and, at the same time, more advantageous to thyself.

III. Consider the words that Our Lord subjoined : *Si in viridi ligno hæc faciunt, in arido quid fiet ?*—Luc. xxiii. 31—*For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry ?* by which He meant to say—if Divine Justice has heaped so much suffering on one Who is Himself innocent, for the faults of others,

how much greater and excruciating suffering must not await the obstinate sinner for his own personal crimes, when the time comes for him to be cast like dry wood into the fire of hell ! Be persuaded of this, that the sufferings not only of hell, but also of purgatory, are far more searching and cruel than even those which Our Lord endured in His most painful passion, because they are in a higher order of things. Beseech Jesus to deign to give thee the grace to bewail thy sins with a lively and sincere grief, so that thou mayest be able to escape those dreadful flames.

THURSDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

Virgo filia Jerusalem, magna est velut mare contritio tua—Thren. ii. 13.

O daughter of Jerusalem, great as the sea is thy destruction.

I. CONSIDER that as Christ had several times foretold His Passion to His Apostles, so also He made it known, in all its details, to His blessed Mother : and when He began His Passion in the garden, He enabled her, by an interior light, to see His sufferings so distinctly that she felt them all, just as though she had been present—all His anguish, and interior sadness, the insults, blows, scourges, and thorns. Afterwards, when Jesus went forth from the pretorium to go to Calvary, she also went out to meet Him, in order to have her share in the sacrifice of the cross. Think, then, what must her feelings have been at beholding her Son so disfigured, and when her eyes met those of her Son, with the cross on His shoulders ! What an agonising interchange of sorrowing glances—far more cruel than

the wound of any piercing dart ! She doted on Jesus as her child, and loved Him even more as the Son of the Eternal Father, with an unutterable love ; and, therefore, if the grief she felt at beholding the cruel sufferings of Jesus as man was past expression, far more unspeakable was the grief she experienced at the outrages offered to His divine person. Canst thou help pitying her, and condoling with her, in her great affliction ?

II. Consider that the Blessed Virgin well knew that her Son was suffering all this by disposition of the Eternal Father, whose Will it was that He should fully atone for our sins, for which He had made Himself answerable. So perfectly did she resign and conform herself to the Will of the Eternal Father, that she would willingly have even acted as executioner, and nailed Him to the cross with her own hands, if needful, and made an offering of her own life with that of her Son for the good pleasure of the Eternal Father. Admire Mary's firmness and courage, and learn thence that true virtue consists chiefly in uniting thy will to that of God, in circumstances which are more than usually painful and contrary to thy natural feelings. Be ashamed at the weakness and cowardice, thou hast hitherto shown in every little trial or misfortune.

III. Consider how when the Blessed Virgin heard her Son on the cross offering to His Eternal Father, His sufferings and His life itself for His crucifiers, and for all of us guilty creatures, she also undertook the office of advocate for all, by imploring pardon of the Eternal Father, and offering Him the blood of her Son in atonement for our crimes. Oh wonderful love of Mary—rivalling, if it were possible, even that of the Eternal Father ! His love reached its highest pitch in handing over His own Son to death for our sakes : *Proprio Filio non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus*

tradidit illum—Rom. viii. 32—*He spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.* The same did the Blessed Virgin also do for us at the foot of the cross : *Ut servum redimerent, communem filium traderunt*, says S. Bonaventure—to free a slave they sacrificed Him who was the Son of both. Offer her therefore thy warmest thanks for so great love, and have recourse to her in all thy needs. If for thy sake she even made a sacrifice of the life of Jesus, what will she deny thee that is to thy advantage ? *Omnia cum illo nobis donavit*—in Him she has given us a pledge to grant all that we ask for.

FRIDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

Exeamus igitur ad eum extra castra improprium ejus portantes—Hebr. xiii. 13.

Let us go forth, therefore, to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.

I. CONSIDER that it was Christ's own choice to die on Calvary, outside the city of Jerusalem, in conformity with the custom of slaying the victims for the sacrifices beyond the precincts of the city walls—*extra castra*. This He did to show that He offered Himself to the justice of God Almighty, as an expiatory victim, not for the Jews only, but for the Gentiles also, without distinction. Mount Calvary is said to be, by geographers, the centre of the then known world, and it was of this spot that the prophet foretold : *Operatus est salutem in medio terræ*—Ps. lxxiii. 12—*He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth* ; to the end that all mankind might know where to have recourse, in order to enjoy the benefit of redemption. How far

art thou ready to lend thy services to thy neighbour, and to extend thy charity to the advantage of all, without preference or distinction of any sort? True charity excludes no one; because just as there can be no real faith in a Christian who denies a single one of its articles, so also there is no real charity in thy heart if thou makest any exception to the prejudice of any single individual.

II. Consider how Christ, at His birth, made choice for this event of the dead of the night, in an unfrequented cave; whilst now that He is to be crucified, He wishes that His death should take place on Calvary in broad daylight, and at a time of the year when the festival of the Easter-lamb was being kept by a numberless throng of people; for He was that spotless lamb, Who by means of His blood was to free us from the death of sin and eternal punishment. Think, then, what shame Jesus must have felt at beholding Himself sentenced to the most disgraceful death of the cross, in the presence of so many people gathered together from different parts, and from Judæa and Galilee also, who had formed a high idea of His sanctity, and believed Him to be the true Messiah, on account of the many and great miracles they had heard noised abroad, as having been wrought by Him. How all those people now considered themselves deceived, and believed Jesus to be a downright impostor! At the sight of thy Saviour overpowered with shame and confusion for the love of thee, wilt thou have the effrontery to take exception at every little point of false honour, and not be able to brook any little insult for the love of Him?

III. Consider how it was usual to give a little wine and myrrh to those who were about to be executed, to strengthen them: but to Jesus, whose strength was already spent, owing to the dreadful torments He had gone through, and the loss of so much blood, was given

wine mixed with gall. He took a sip of this mixture, just so much as was enough to embitter His thirsty palate without affording Him any refreshment. This was the way in which Jesus paid for those needless dainties thou perhaps takest, and art so anxious to procure, to satisfy thy delicacy in eating and drinking. Thou mayest likewise discern in this mixture of wine and gall an image of thy own ingratitude, when in the very act of offering thy Lord the wine of works that are good in themselves, thou minglest with them the gall of crooked intentions, and many other shortcomings which are a cause of bitterness to thy Redeemer.

SATURDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

Et crucifixerunt eum—Luc. xxiii. 33.

And . . . they crucified Him.

I. CONSIDER how after Jesus had been again stripped of His clothes, to His own great agony, on account of their cleaving to His wounds, and with even greater confusion than before, because He was left standing in broad daylight exposed to the gaze of so numerous a crowd,—He at last laid Himself down on the cross at the bidding of His executioners, and stretched out His arms as though to atone for Adam's sin in raising his hand to the forbidden fruit, and for all our sins also, in disobeying the commandments of God. See here before thee a God who readily yields to the wishes of those ruthless menials, because in them He sees the instruments of His Father's Will : how, then, canst thou fail to recognise the Will of God in the commands

of thy superior, and by obeying but grudgingly a man for God's sake, be remiss in making amends for thy many acts of disobedience to the Will of God ?

II. Consider what dreadful throes of keenest pain Jesus must have felt when the nails were driven by repeated blows of the hammer through His hands and feet—because, as these are parts of the body where there are more nerves and sinews than in any other, His agony must have been unutterable. His agony was enhanced also from the fact of His executioners having made choice of blunt nails—on purpose to make Him suffer the more by their ploughing His sacred flesh all the more cruelly. As soon as one hand and foot were nailed, the sinews contracted, on account of the violence of the pain ; and therefore the soldiers strove with ropes to draw the other hand and foot, by sheer force, to make them reach the holes already prepared. When at times it falls to thy lot to be on the cross, by having to fulfil some burdensome charge or office, or live in some distasteful spot, thou seekest to make thy cross accommodate itself to thee, and to lighten its inconveniences as far as thou canst, instead of adapting thyself to it, because the labour entailed by such office, or duty, is unpleasant, and the toil unsuited to thy natural inclinations. But art thou not aware that it is precisely in adapting thyself to the cross, and in the consequent suffering, that real crucifixion and the real imitation of the crucified One consist ?

III. Consider that so soon as Jesus was fastened to the cross it was raised on high by the executioners, and let drop into a hole prepared for it, with such a jerk that it shook His whole frame, and greatly added to the throbbing smart of His wounds. On beholding Jesus raised aloft on that disgraceful gibbet, the Jews, like all evildoers *qui exultant in rebus pessimis*—Prov. ii. 14—who rejoice in most wicked things, set up cries

of joy, and the awful sight only awakes a feeling of satisfaction in their bosoms. But do thou adore Him, and tender Him thy heartfelt thanks, as He hangs on that tree raised on high between earth and heaven, in order to become the peacemaker between God and man, with His arms opened wide, to give thee to understand that *non est abbreviata manus Domini*—Isa. lix. 1—the *hand of the Lord is not shortened*: and that if thou dost but fly to Him for help, He will welcome thee with the greatest love, He will embrace thee and press thee to His bosom, and keep thee safe within His sacred wounds. Beg Him, therefore, by that love which has brought Him to hang on that hard wood, that He would deign to bind thee and nail thee to His cross, so that thou mayest be able to say with S. Paul: *Christo confixus sum cruci*—Gal. ii. 19—I am nailed to the cross with Christ.

PASSION SUNDAY.

Jesus autem abscondit se, et exivit de templo.—Joan. viii. 59.

But Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.

I. CONSIDER that as Almighty God is wont to employ three sorts of scourges in His dealings with men—namely, the scourge of probation with which He tries the virtue of the good, the scourge of correction with which He punishes the guilty, and the scourge of reprobation with which He damns the reprobate—so also He makes use of three different sorts of concealment. He hides Himself from the good by taking away from them the interior light and spiritual consolations they once enjoyed, and leaving them in the

midst of such dryness, obscurity and scruples that they are fain almost to think that Almighty God has altogether withdrawn Himself from them. This He allows in order to give them an opportunity for the exercise of loftier virtue. If, perchance, thou find thyself in a like condition, without having given Him any reason for thus hiding Himself from thee, thou mayest be sure that Almighty God wants to try thy faithfulness in this wise. In the event of thy remaining steadfast in His service, by keeping up the practice of reciting thy accustomed prayers, and performing thy penances and mortifications with as great fidelity in time of desolation as before--what treasures of merit will not this firmness of purpose bring thee! In proportion as it appears certain to thee that thy Saviour has concealed Himself from thee, so much the nearer to thee, and the more intimately present to thee, will He be in reality.

II. Consider that Our Lord hides Himself in the generality of cases from the guilty, in punishment of their faults and shortcomings. They either omit or hurry over their prayers and spiritual reading, or else, perhaps, they are negligent in regular observance, and make little account of venial sins by harbouring in their hearts many a wrong and guilty affection. What wonder, therefore, is it that Our Lord should withdraw and hide Himself from one who lives at a distance from Him, and has His grace and favour so little at heart? Of this class are those, also, who experience nothing but wearisomeness in all their spiritual exercises, and are ever discontented with the religious life they profess. Woe to thee if thou shouldst recognise this to be thy state! Endeavour by humble and frequent recourse to Almighty God to beg Him, in His infinite mercy, to help thee to rid thyself of this want of principle, which may be the cause of thy falling headlong over some fatal precipice, and strive

meanwhile to keep a stricter guard over thy failings, and to apply thyself more earnestly to thy spiritual exercises.

III. Consider that Almighty God hides Himself, and that, too, irretrievably, from the reprobate by abandoning them, and allowing them to fall into fresh and greater faults, and at last even into the penalty of eternal damnation. It was in this way that Jesus hid Himself from the Jews when He went out of the temple. These obstinate men were determined not to receive His teaching, nor to acknowledge Him as the Messiah, although He afforded them every opportunity for doing so by His many and wonderful miracles—and they all the time denounced Him as one who dealt with and was possessed by the devil, heaping every kind of injury and insult on Him, and even going so far as to take up stones to cast at Him. Justly, therefore, were they abandoned by Almighty God, by permitting them to carry out their design of putting Jesus to the death of the Cross, and thus bring down on their own heads their final downfall, both spiritually and temporally. See then into what a frightful depth of crime the Hebrew nation fell headlong—that chosen people, so favoured by heaven and protected by God! Downfalls like to this are not un- rarely witnessed even in the cloister, forasmuch as many a soul favoured with a religious vocation, and raised even to a high degree of virtue, has afterwards, by reason of its ingratitude and ill correspondence with God's goodness, been forsaken by heaven and allowed to fall into the most frightful excesses, even into apostasy, and has thus made an awful and pitiable end by an impenitent death. If thou wouldst keep thyself aloof from the danger of falling from such a precipice, never show thyself ungrateful for God's benefits, and bear in mind that saying of the gospel : *Cui plus datum*

est, plus requiretur ab eo—Luc. xii. 48—Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.

MONDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Et cum eo alios duos hinc et hinc, medium autem Jesum.
—Joan. xix. 18.

And with Him (they crucified) two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst.

I. CONSIDER how the Jews, not content with putting Jesus to such a painful and disgraceful death as that of the cross, determined on having Him crucified for His greater shame between two thieves, as an arch-ruffian and an impious claimant to divine honours, and that in this way His name might be buried in disgrace and His memory blotted out. But this His disgrace, so long foretold by Isaias, *Et cum iniquis reputatis est—Is. liii. 12—He was reputed with the wicked*, was a mystery of the unfathomable providence of God, and was brought about for our instruction and benefit. Thank, then, thy Saviour Who has been so good as to further thy salvation at the price of His own so great humiliation, and at the same time make up thy mind to put up willingly with whatever little shame may fall to thy lot in procuring His glory.

II. Consider what was the lesson that Christ principally intended should be learned from the fact of His having two felons as companions on Calvary. It was to give hope of pardon to even the most sinful culprits, to the exception of no one. When He came on earth, He conversed familiarly with publicans and sinners, in order to convert them and allure them to repentance: *Peccatores recipit et manducat cum illis—Luc. xv. 2*

—*This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.* So also, even when hanging on the cross, He wished to be in the company of sinners, in order to show that He was dying on their behalf, and that so far as He was concerned He was ready to save them so soon as they should fit themselves to receive His grace. What confidence ought to be awakened in thy heart on beholding Jesus hanging on the cross, in company with ill-doers, and sacrificing for them His blood and His life ! Thou art a sinner, it is true, but not for that must thou despair of gaining admittance to Calvary and of becoming a companion of Jesus crucified, Who will help thee in life, and will not forsake thee in death.

III. Consider that Jesus was crucified between two thieves to show also that He was judge of the living and the dead, thus making Calvary itself a tribunal of justice, closely resembling that of Josaphat. In the valley of Josaphat His juridical insignia will be the cross, and He will have the elect on His right hand, and the reprobate on His left : on these He will pass sentence of punishment ; on the former, of glory. This is just what He does on the cross on Calvary : He condemns the wicked thief, and saves the good one. What a grand lesson is this for thee ! Thou art fastened to the cross by means of thy religious vows, and art crucified with Christ ; but from the different lots which fell to the share of these two thieves, who were crucified together with Christ, learn that in order to make thy salvation sure, it is not enough to live in religion fastened to the cross, unless like the good thief thou endurest thy cross patiently and with humility, and in the grace and favour of Jesus, Who was crucified for thy sake.

TUESDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Inspice et fac secundum exemplar, quod tibi in monte monstratum est.—Exod. xxv. 40.

Look and make it according to the pattern that was shown thee on the mount.

I. CONSIDER Christ on the altar of the cross acting as priest, and offering up for us all a propitiatory sacrifice, by immolating to the justice of God, not indeed the blood of sheep or lambs, but His own blood and His own life of infinite worth. His brow is encircled with a crown of thorns in lieu of a mitre, in His hands He carries nails instead of a crozier, and His flesh, purpled with His own blood and embroidered with wounds, serves Him as the priestly robe. On beholding this divine high-priest making an offering of Himself on the cross for thee to His Eternal Father, wilt thou not be induced to make Him an offering in return of at least a contrite and humble heart, so that the huge debt of thy sins may be entirely cancelled through the infinite merits of this priceless Victim? Without blood, says the Apostle, there is no forgiveness: it is the blood offered for us by Jesus that thou oughtest to be ever presenting to the justice of God to blot out thy sins—*Sine sanguinis effusione non fit remissio*—Hebr. x. 22.

II. Consider Christ on the cross as thy master in His chair, and imagine that He is teaching thee and explaining His heavenly doctrines. *Factus pro nobis sapientia a Deo*—1 Cor. i. 30—*Who from God is made unto us wisdom.* And indeed which is there of all the truths contained in the four gospels that is not clearly exemplified by Jesus crucified, Whose wounds are so

many tongues, Whose blood is a powerful voice, Whose cross is a rule wherewith to measure the greatness of heaven, the smallness of earth, the vanity and worthlessness of all that passes with time, and the worth and importance of eternity? Where else canst thou learn so much truth and obtain so much light as in silently contemplating and listening to Jesus crucified? *Qui appropinquant pedibus ejus, accipient de doctrina ejus*—Deut. xxxiii. 3—*They that approach to His feet shall receive of His doctrine.* Go, then, by all means, to the school of Calvary, for thou wilt there become a greater sage than Plato, by learning what is the real good after which thou must search, what is the real evil thou must shun, and thou wilt exclaim with the Apostle: *Non judicavi me scire aliquid . . . nisi Jesum Christum, et hunc crucifixum*—1 Cor. ii. 2—*I judged not myself to know anything . . . but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*

III. Consider Christ on Calvary as your leader, Who raises the cross aloft as His standard, and invites thee by word and deed to fight against thy enemies, in order to win for thyself the kingdom of heaven. Thy fiercest foes, who are ever warring against thee, are thine own unruly desires for pleasures, honours, and riches. Look and see how Jesus has subdued the desire of pleasure by the many bruises and the great sufferings He has endured in His body: how He has mastered the desire of honours by undergoing so much shame and confusion, as to have reached even the lowest depths of disgrace: *Saturabitur opprobriis*—Thren. iii. 30—*He shall be filled with reproaches*; and lastly, how He has triumphed over the desire of the goods of this world, by dying naked, without even a drop of water to relieve His thirst, or a winding-sheet in which to wrap His dead body. From the example of thy leader, learn how thou oughtest to fight against thy disorderly appetites, seeing that in thy character

of religious thou hast enlisted under the banner of the cross.

WEDNESDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Scriptit autem titulum Pilatus, et posuit super crucem : erat autem scriptum, Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Judæorum.—
Joan. xix. 19.

And Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it upon the cross : and the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

I. CONSIDER that when Our Lord took the name of Jesus He did so privately, on the occasion of His first shedding a few drops of blood at His circumcision : but on Calvary, where He shed every drop of blood from His veins, He declares Himself to be Jesus publicly, and in the face of His sworn enemies, by heading His cross with this life-giving name written in three different languages. He thus declared Himself to be our Saviour from the opening of His life until its close. Nor was Jesus, which means Saviour, His only name when hanging on the cross, but He is given the epithet of Nazarene also, which means holy or florid ; because it was on the cross that He caused the holiness of His divine virtues to flourish and expand in all their majesty and beauty. When thou didst begin to serve Almighty God in religion, it was thy desire to be a religious not in name only but in reality, by endeavouring to acquire solid virtue. But how far hast thou realised this desire in the past ? and what evidence hast thou given of it outwardly in thy behaviour towards thy neighbour ? God knows whether perhaps, instead of giving proofs of the virtue a religious ought to possess, thou only givest

too great signs of worldly manners and worldly behaviour, so that thou hast nothing of the monk about thee but the name and the habit.

II. Consider that when the Jews saw this heading which Pilate had had fastened to the cross, they set themselves against it and complained—not wishing to have for their king a man who was crucified. This is the case with many; they wish indeed to have Christ for their king, but they do not like to have Him for their king when He is on the cross, in the midst of trials, poverty and pain; they would fain adore and follow Christ, but on condition of their having no cross to carry or of being able to do so surrounded by every sort of comfort, honour and amusement. Do not then be one of this shortsighted class, because whosoever refuses the cross of Christ, will never share the kingdom of Christ.

III. Consider the wise reply that Pilate gave under the influence of a heaven-sent inspiration: *Quod scripsi, scripsi—What I have written, I have written.* To all the other unfair demands of the Jews Pilate yields cowardly consent—even so far as to condemn Jesus unjustly to be scourged and to be crucified. It is only on the occasion of this their request relative to the label to be affixed to the cross that he holds his own ground, it being God's Will that Jesus crucified should be acknowledged by all as the true king of mankind—*regnavit a ligno Deus*—as the Church sings. This answer of Pilate is also the answer that thou must give when the devil, the world and the flesh tempt thee to change thy good purposes and holy resolutions made at the foot of the crucifix during thy prayer, or in thy retreats, and especially in the act of embracing the religious state. *Quod scripsi, scripsi—What I have written, I have written.* I am determined to live up to what I have promised Almighty God, I am determined on persevering in the good already begun. Happy

indeed wilt thou be if thou standest firm against the unjust claims of thy enemies.

THURSDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Consideraverunt et inspexerunt me. Diviserunt sibi vestimenta mea, et super vestem meam miserunt sortem.—Ps. xxi. 18.

They have looked and stared upon me. They parted my garments amongst them : and upon my vesture they cast lots.

I. CONSIDER that we all possess in this life four sorts of goods, viz. : of body, of material possessions, of good name and those that belong to the soul. After the Jews had ill-treated Jesus as far as His body was concerned by tearing and disfiguring His head with thorns, His hands and feet with nails, and all His other limbs with scourges, they set about to injure Him in His rights to what was His own under other titles. And first of all they rob Him of His temporal goods by sharing His clothes amongst themselves under His own eyes, and casting dice for His under garment. The clothes of felons are as a matter of course the executioners' perquisite, and therefore it would not seem that this was so serious a wrong or sufficiently grievous to be a subject of bitter complaint through the mouth of David. But Our Lord did feel this insult most deeply, because in that action He saw imaged the deep wrong that is done Him even by spiritual men, when from their anxiety for the goods of this world—of which his outer garments were an emblem—they show themselves so eager to keep their

temporal goods safely, whilst on the other hand they are not afraid to expose the good of their souls—betokened by his inner garment—to the risk of hazard or to the chances of a death-bed. This inversion of the right order of things, so common in the world, is not uncommon even in the cloister, where we see certain religious ever eagerly bent either on obtaining some honourable post or on furthering their own interests in the fulfilment of their charge or on gaining a name for great learning, whilst they hardly give a thought to the acquisition of virtue or the pursuit of perfection. Take heed lest thou give thy Saviour reason to complain of thee on this score.

II. Consider that no sooner had the executioners possessed themselves of His garments than they proceeded to attack His good name, loading Him with reproaches, turning His miracles to scorn, and laughing at His sufferings. Behold here a God dying on the cross for man's salvation, and see how He is treated by man in His very agony. The world will never lack men who scoff at those who do good, but what an especial and bitter hardship it is to be sneered at in one's greatest trials! It will perhaps fall to thy lot some day, when thou art weighed down by bodily ailing or sadness of soul, to be made the butt of undeserved reproaches: in such circumstances as these bethink thee of Jesus on the cross blasphemed and sneered at, and thou wilt find strength in this thought.

III. Consider how the devil maliciously strove to rob Jesus of even the spiritual goods of the soul by means of the Jews when they said to Him: *Descendat de cruce, ut credamus*—Marc. xv. 32—*Let Christ come down from the cross, that we may believe*. The devil saw that Jesus was making a sacrifice of His life to save the souls of men, and he invites Him by the mouths of the Jews and urges Him to come down from the

cross, holding out to Him the hope of saving all the souls of that chosen people, if only He would miraculously unnailed Himself from the cross. This is a temptation the devil often tries on with religious, it being his aim to make them lose the good they are actually doing through obedience in their particular monastery or occupation, by holding out to them the hope of doing greater good elsewhere if they could only carry out their own ideas. Never give ear to any one who proposes to thee to forsake the cross obedience has laid on thee, so that it may truly be said of thee as it was of Christ—*Factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis*—Philip. ii. 8—*He became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.*

FRIDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Jesus autem dicebat: Pater ignosce illis, non enim sciunt quid faciunt.—Luc. xxiii. 34.

And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

I. CONSIDER how although Jesus had remained in continued silence on the cross amidst all His sufferings and insults, He now at length unseals His lips, and the first word He utters is a prayer to His divine Father to pardon His crucifiers. In this way He shows His desire of giving the first place and the first honours to charity the queen of virtues, and particularly to that wondrous charity which returns good for evil and confers benefits on enemies. Thus Jesus on the cross was like to the red-hot iron which scatters brighter sparks the harder it is struck. In the supper-room our divine Master laid particular stress on the obliga-

tion of charity ; and on the cross the first example He wishes to leave the faithful is that of charity. Bear in mind therefore that thy charity will prove itself vigorous and healthy in proportion as it reaches those who are the farthest off and confers benefits on the most unworthy. Why then wouldst thou make greater account of every other virtue rather than of that of charity towards those that are undeserving or are thy enemies ?

II. Consider that Christ was not content with merely forgiving His crucifiers in His own heart, but He chose to make a public prayer for pardon to His divine Father, extenuating and excusing as far as He could the awful crime of that dreadful Deicide, and laying the blame to their ignorance, in order to obtain forgiveness of the crime the more readily : *Pater ignosce illis, non enim sciunt quod faciunt*—Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. A bright example is this of a heartfelt forgiveness of offences. When at times thou receivest some grievance or wrong, either from thy own brethren or from strangers, it is to be supposed that thou art always ready to forgive them, in order to avoid any breach of the law of charity ; but it is not perhaps so certain that thou forgivest them fully, because if in the meanwhile thou dost all thou canst to get the offender punished by thy superiors, by giving exaggerated accounts of the wrong received, or if thou nourishest the desire of seeing him punished by Providence, thy forgiveness is not complete, nor dost thou fulfil the law of charity in its fulness. Therefore it was that Christ, for thy instruction, not only forgave His crucifiers, but prayed that they might not be punished by His heavenly Father.

III. Consider with how much warmth and earnestness Jesus poured forth this prayer to His Father : *Jesus autem dicebat* ; by which words it is implied that He did not pray once only, but over and over again,

keeping on repeating His prayer in different ways—not only speaking with His lips and in His heart, but also with the ceaseless voice of His blood and wounds, offering up with tears and groans the merits of His sufferings and of His death on behalf of His crucifiers, so much so that Jesus could not have prayed with greater fervour for His own mother, who gave Him His life, than He did for these wicked wretches who were taking it away from Him. Dost thou not blush at this example, since thy past conduct shows that when thou hast forgiven any injury, thou art more mindful of the injury received than of the pardon given, always showing that it is fresh in thy memory by the unkind things thou sayest to the offender, by the harsh mien thou showest him, and the withdrawal of those little acts of politeness and charity which thou wouldst not have refused him before the offence was given? In a word, it is a most heroic and at the same time a most uncommon virtue that of forgiving an injury from the bottom of one's heart, and of returning good for evil to the person that inflicted it.

SATURDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Nos quidem juste, nam digna factis recipimus : hic vero nihil mali gessit . . . Domine, memento mei dum veneris in regnum tuum.—Luc. xxiii. 41.

We indeed (are condemned) justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds : but this man hath done no evil . . . Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom.

I. CONSIDER the wonderful conversion of the good thief. He sees the patience and unwearied meekness

of the dying Jesus, and His heroic charity in praying His divine Father for His crucifiers. He is strengthened by divine grace in so far as to acknowledge Him to be the promised Messiah and the true Son of God, suffering there to atone for our crimes. Thereupon he begins to pity His sufferings, to proclaim His innocence, and to rebuke his companion, who was insulting and blaspheming Him. Oh, what a noble act ! what manly virtue in this poor thief to raise aloft his standard, as it were, in defence of Jesus crucified, before the very faces of so many who scowled at Him as a felon. Learn a lesson from this thief, and when thou turnest thy eyes towards Jesus crucified, sympathise in His sufferings, and detest thy sins, on account of which He undergoes so much pain ; make thy own the many injuries He receives all the day long from wicked men, and do thy best to correct those whom it is thy duty to correct, or also any other delinquent when circumstances permit.

II. Consider what it was that the good thief asked of Jesus. He does not beg to be set free from his sufferings, nor to be loosed from the cross, nor for any other advantage in this life, but his only prayer is for the goods of the next world : *Domine, memento mei dum veneris in regnum tuum—Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom* ; this was certainly wonderful faith in this murderer, who acknowledges as the Lord and sovereign master of an immortal kingdom, one who is hanging on a disgraceful gibbet, and a butt there and then of the outrages and scoffs of all the bystanders. He makes no other request than that, when seated on His throne of glory, He should remember His fellow-sufferer on the cross. What prayers dost thou put up at the feet of Jesus crucified ? Wouldst thou have the face to beg for earthly goods and honours, for comfort and consolation during the present life, when thou beholdest Him

naked, despised, and in torture for thy own greater good? It was never Christ's intention to win for thee earthly and fleeting goods at the cost of His blood and life, but thy spiritual and eternal welfare, and therefore what thou oughtest above all else to ask for is, that He should make thee worthy to share His cross now, that thou mayest afterwards share also His kingdom.

III. Consider the answer that Christ made to the request of the thief: *Hodie mecum eris in paradiso—This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise*;—thou who art now sinking with pain on the cross, together with Me, shalt on this very day be in My company, reigning in paradise; thou shalt be the first amongst My elect to pass straightway, without let or hindrance, from a gibbet to a throne.—Now if Our Lord rewards a thief, who had spent his life in rapine, so handsomely for his noble profession of faith on Calvary, what may not a religious hope for who serves Him both in life and death, and is also the faithful companion of His cross? Meanwhile, admire the unfathomable judgments of Almighty God, Who saves one of the two thieves who were crucified together with Christ, and damns the other; and if the one that was saved gives thee reason to hope, let the other one that was lost keep thee in fear, and be a motive for thee to bear thy cross patiently in atonement for thy sins.

PALM SUNDAY.

Turbæ clamabant, dicentes : Hosanna filio David ; benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini—Matth. xxi. 9.

The multitude . . . cried, saying : Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

I. CONSIDER how Christ, at all times such a lover of humility, makes a triumphal entry, on this day, into the city of Jerusalem, to teach thee three truths. The first is, that as He went to encounter death, He wished thee to know that He gloried in dying on the cross for thy sake. When speaking to His disciples about His death, He styled it, on several occasions, His exaltation; and to-day He goes in triumph to meet His cross, to show thee more clearly that He deems Himself honoured by suffering so disgraceful a punishment on thy behalf. Is not this enough to cover thee with confusion—seeing that thou thyself makest so little account of the honour of suffering something for the love of Jesus, and of enduring shame and confusion in His service, and for His glory? Christ goes in triumph to embrace the cross: thou shunnest it and lookest upon it as a disgrace! What a contrast!

II. Consider that the second truth which Jesus teaches thee by this His triumphant entry; is this: that He is always ready to show that same love and goodwill which He displayed on this His joyful and festive return to the unloyal city of Jerusalem, to those souls which have outraged Him, and have obliged Him to leave them, provided only they are disposed to allow Him to enter their hearts, and to receive Him with that homage which is His due. By thy ingratitude and ill-correspondence, thou hast but too often

obliged Jesus to withdraw and hide Himself by depriving thee of His especial light and help, and interior consolations. It is high time, therefore, that thou shouldst go forth to meet Him, and give Him a triumphant reception, and that after the example of the Jewish crowds, thou shouldst strip thyself of thy bad habits, and cast them at His feet; that thou shouldst hold in thy hand the palm branch by the victory over thy passions, and the olive branch—the symbol of true peace with God. If thou actest in this manner thou wilt be more than ever enriched by Our Lord with His gifts and graces—just as the Roman Emperors used to do of old, who, on their triumphant entries, made handsome presents to the people in return for the greeting and homage with which they received them.

III. Consider what is the lesson Our Lord intends to teach thee by the tears He shed, amidst the welcomes of the crowd. He wept over the blindness and fickleness of that unhappy nation, which proclaims Him to be the Messiah and the Son of God, and after a day or two will shout out *Crucifige—crucify Him*; thus drawing down upon themselves the final destruction of their nation, once so beloved by God, and bringing about a downfall that was to crush, not only their spiritual welfare, but their temporal prosperity as well. He intends, therefore, to show thee by these His tears, how much He is displeased at the changeableness and fickleness of a soul that at one moment honours Him as its Lord, and shortly after outrages Him by changing its homage into scorn. Look a little into thy own heart, and see how far thou standest firm to thy good resolutions, and in the practice of virtue, because it is only perseverance that wins the crown.

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

Cum vidisset Jesus matrem et discipulum stantem, quem diligebat, dicit matri suæ : Mulier ecce filius tuus : Deinde dicit discipulo, Ecce mater tua—Joan. xix. 26.

When Jesus had seen His mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His mother : Woman behold thy Son. After that He saith to the disciple : Behold thy mother.

I. CONSIDER that all the while the Blessed Virgin was standing under the cross, weighing in her own mind the excess of the suffering of her beloved Son, her tender heart was pierced by as many arrows of grief as were the glances she cast, from time to time, in search of the bruises that disfigured His divine body, all torn and weltering in His own blood. She might exclaim with even greater truth than Job : *In amaritudinibus moratur oculus meus—Job xvii. 2—My eye abideth in bitterness ;* and what heart-rendings did not the Son endure on beholding His own mother in such distress on His account ! Canst thou refrain from pitying Him in such bitter suffering of soul and body ? And yet in this distressing position Jesus does not forget to further and provide for our welfare, saying to the Blessed Virgin : *Mulier, ecce filius tuus—Woman, behold thy Son ;* by which words He handed over S. John to her as a son, and in him all the faithful who cling to Christ ; at the same time He constituted S. John and all the faithful heirs of that love which the Blessed Virgin bore Him as her own Son. Give Him, therefore, thy heart-felt thanks for this so great a boon He bestowed on thee in the last moments of His mortal life ; and when thou hast recourse to the Blessed Virgin for aid, put her in mind, from time to time, of the obligation her dying Jesus laid on her

of loving thee with the tenderness of a mother, as her own son and the brother of Jesus.

II. Consider, that as by saying to the Blessed Virgin, *Ecce Filius tuus—Behold thy son*, Our Lord bequeathed to us the love she bore Him, so also by saying to the disciple, *Ecce Mater tua—Behold thy mother!* He left S. John, and in S. John, all the faithful, heirs of that filial love which He Himself bore His mother. Learn from this what an obligation thou art under of honouring and loving the Blessed Virgin as thy own mother, and of obeying and reverencing her as Jesus did. If thou fulfillest the duty of a good son towards the Blessed Virgin, she will show thee the tender offices of a fond mother.

III. Consider that the Blessed Virgin has three kinds of children. Some are her children because they are quickened by sanctifying grace, and are therefore members united to, and incorporated with, Christ; and since the Blessed Virgin is mother of Christ, she is also the mother of the members of Christ's mystical body: *Mater Christi, mater est membrorum Christi*, says the Abbot Gilbert—*The mother of Christ is also the mother of Christ's members*. Others are children of the Blessed Virgin and members of Christ, because they dedicate themselves with an especial love to the honour and service of Christ, and of His Blessed Mother. Others, in fine, are children of the Blessed Virgin and members of Christ, because they glory in being the inseparable companions of Jesus and Mary on Calvary: and these are the favourites who, like S. John, win for themselves under the cross the honour of the familiarity of a brother with Jesus, and of the especial adoption of Mary amongst her children. To which class dost thou belong?

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

Sciens Jesus quia omnia consummata sunt dixit, Sitio . . . Illi autem spongiam plenam aceto hyssopo circumponentes obtulerunt ori ejus—Joan. xix. 25.

Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, said, I thirst . . . and they putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to His mouth.

I. CONSIDER that as the moment drew near when Jesus was to breath forth His last, He cried out *Sitio—I thirst*, in the first place to make known to all the intense thirst He suffered in His body, which became extreme at this the last moment of life, by reason of the fatigue He had endured, of the loss of so much blood, and of the interior sadness which racked and parched His very bowels. He gave evidence of His intense suffering on the cross, to show us how dearly our gluttony and intemperance have cost Him; for these are vices which give rise at times, even in religious communities, to complaints and feelings of discontent, under colour of necessity or the requirements of health. Often call to mind the fact that thy dying Jesus was not allowed to quench, or even allay His burning thirst, and so thou wilt not be so apt to seek unnecessary dispensations, nor complain any more of wanting anything, even though it should appear necessary, much less should it be only a matter of greater or less convenience.

II. Consider that Jesus cried out *Sitio* to make known also the great thirst He felt in His soul to suffer everything that had been appointed by His Father, and to fulfil His divine command to the very letter. The command given Him by His Father was not simply a general sort of ordinance that He should sacrifice

His life for us in any way, but it was a most minute and detailed decree, with all its circumstances as foretold by the prophets, amongst which was also this, that His thirst on the cross was to be assuaged by a draught of vinegar : *In siti mea potaverunt me aceto*—Ps. lxxviii. 22 —*In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* Our Lord, therefore, on seeing Himself at the point of death, cried out *Sitio*, in order that He might not give up the ghost without this torment, which yet remained for Him to undergo, in order to accomplish His last act of obedience to His heavenly Father. Oh how different is thy behaviour in resigning thyself to the Will of Almighty God, which thou so often overlookest in order to escape even the slightest displeasure or inconvenience ! Yet thy dying Jesus seeks and asks for fresh torments, in order that no circumstance of His death should be wanting to the perfect fulfilment of the Divine Will : what a motive of shame for thee !

III. Consider that Jesus cried out *Sitio* to make known the spiritual thirst by which He was consumed for the salvation of souls, for the sake of which He would willingly have remained hanging on the cross still longer, if such had been the good pleasure of His Father. Hence in that outburst of His soul to His Father : *Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me ?*—*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?*—He complained to His heavenly Father that He felt that especial support failing Him which had so far miraculously kept Him in life amidst His many and overpowering sufferings : His desire was to remain even longer on the cross, offering His blood and His sufferings in fuller satisfaction of the justice of God, and to move His Father to pity in behalf of the souls of men. This is the thirst which gave Our Saviour the greatest torture, since He saw that in the case of so many souls the price of their ransom would be of little or

no avail, and the treasure of His infinite merit prove fruitless in their regard. Endeavour, therefore, to further thy own spiritual welfare in real earnest, as also that of thy neighbour, with a view to slake the burning thirst of thy Redeemer. The hard-hearted Jews gave Him only vinegar and gall to quench His bodily thirst; and would to God that perchance thou do not treat His spiritual thirst for souls in a like manner, by injuring the interests of thy own soul, and of the souls of thy neighbours, instead of benefiting them.

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

Cum accepisset Jesus acetum, dixit: Consummatum est—Joan. xix. 30.

When Jesus had taken the vinegar, He said: It is consummated.

I. CONSIDER how just before breathing His last, Jesus, seeing that He had accomplished everything that His Father demanded of Him, and all that was foretold of His life and death in Holy Writ, cried out, *Consummatum est—It is consummated*, to signify that He died happy and content at having fulfilled most exactly the Will of His heavenly Father during the thirty-three years of His sojourn in this world. Oh, what a great comfort it will be for thee, at the end of thy life, if thou also art able to say that thou hast done the Will of God all thy life long, and that thou hast fulfilled all that thy rules laid down for thee, and all that was enjoined thee by obedience! Examine thyself, and if thou hast not hitherto been wanting in thy duty, continue in the same way to the end, and thou

wilt have a happy death. But if thou seest that thou failest in many points, try and mend thy manners, because death, which comes unexpectedly, like a thief in the night, would in this case prove but too sad and remorseful.

II. Consider that Jesus exclaimed *Consummatum est* to show that He had done all that depended on Him to bring about the complete success and full effect of our redemption. He had, by the sacrifice of the cross, more than satisfied all the claims of God's infinite justice, and He had made good His Father's honour, which had been slighted by our sins, by meriting for us all, most effective aids to free us from sin, and draw us to the love of virtue. It is thy turn now to do thy part, because without thy co-operation all that Christ has merited for thee, by His life and death, will avail thee nothing. It was in this sense that the Apostle said: *Adimpleo ea, que desunt passionum Christi in carne mea*—Colos. i. 24—I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh; because, in order to reap the fruit of Christ's merits, we must in a certain degree conform ourselves to the sufferings of Christ.

III. Consider that these words of thy dying Saviour will also have to be repeated by thyself at the end of thy life: *Consummatum est*; because then it is that all pleasure is at an end, honours and applause disappear, all penance is over, humiliations gone and past; but with this great difference, that pleasures and honours will be followed by pain and confusion, penance and humiliation by pleasure and glory. How will it fare with thee at thy death? Ah, happy indeed art thou if at that dread moment thou wilt be able to say: *Bonum certamen certavi, cursum consummavi, fidem servavi. In reliquo reposita est mihi corona justitiæ quam reddet mihi Dominus in illa die justus judex*—2 Tim. iv. 7, 8—I have fought a good fight, I have finished my

course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day.

MAUNDY THURSDAY.

O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus.—Thren. i. 12.

O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be sorrow like to my sorrow.

I. CONSIDER Jesus on the cross, in bodily agony, in interior desolation, and bereft of every sort of comfort. Gaze on His body and see how it is one wound from head to foot, the blood trickling down His limbs from His open wounds, His hands and feet torn by nails, and His head pierced on all sides by seventy thorns. In His soul He is weighed down by such overpowering sadness and heaviness, that His sufferings there are far worse than those He endures in His body: He is forsaken by His friends, by His disciples, and by His heavenly Father Himself, without getting the slightest consolation from earth or heaven, scoffed at, insulted and blasphemed by all the mob around. If thou wert to see any ruffian-murderer suffering only a small share of what Jesus had to endure, thy heart would be moved to pity; how much more if it were a loved friend made to suffer unjustly? How, then, canst thou help being touched and moved to deepest compassion at the excessive sufferings of a man-God, Who hangs there before thee, making with His precious blood a life-giving bath in which thy ailings may be cured, and quenching the eternal fire thy sins have deserved.

II. Consider that, although Jesus had made Himself answerable for thy sins, still He might have amply satisfied the justice of God for them by a single drop of blood, or by one only sigh, and yet He has chosen to blot them out by such a lavish profusion of suffering, and by so barbarous a death on the cross, purposely that thou mightest measure the enormity of thy fault by the enormity of the payment He has made for it, and learn the excess of thy malice from the excess of His torments. Is not then all this enough to make thee understand, once for all, that an offence against the majesty of Almighty God is a greater evil than even the death of a God-man, seeing that He chose to undergo the latter to atone for the former ?

III. Consider that in undergoing this overwhelming amount of suffering, it was Jesus' aim to show thee the tenderness of His love for thee, and at one and the same time to win full possession of thy heart : *Dilexit te et tradidit semetipsum pro te*—Galat. ii. 20—*He loved thee and delivered Himself for thee.* Well, then, is it possible that He should not succeed in gaining all thy affection at so dear a rate ? Any one else who for thy sake puts up with some little inconvenience wins thy heart at once, and is sure of thy affection ; and is the Son of God then the only one Who cannot succeed in winning thee over to Him, although He has suffered such excessive tortures on thy account ? Canst thou have the heart to deem it enough merely to refrain from re-opening His wounds and recrucifying Him by mortal sin, without giving any heed or attention to the duty of exchanging love for love, and making Him an offering of thy whole self to His good Will, as He also has offered Himself for thee to His Eternal Father, as a sacrifice of propitiation ?

GOOD FRIDAY.

Jesus autem, clamans voce magna, emisit spiritum.—Matth. xxvii. 50.

And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

I. CONSIDER that this is the day on which thy God, thy Creator, thy Redeemer, closed His mortal career. He breathes His last as man, and cries out as more than man, with a voice so loud that He puts all nature into mourning, and awakens a throe of anguish throughout the whole universe, to teach thee how thou oughtest to bewail this death, of which thou art the real cause. Jesus dies, not through the malice of the Jews, nor through the covetousness of Judas, nor through Pilate's injustice, but because it was His wish to cancel the debt of thy sins, for which He had made Himself answerable. *Vulneratus est propter delicta nostra*—Ps. liii. 5—*He was wounded for our iniquities.* Canst thou not bring thyself, even on this day, to bewail thy sins in good earnest from the bottom of thy heart? Even the treacherous Jews on Calvary, when they saw all nature in travail at the death of its Lord, *revertebantur percutientes pectora sua*—returned home striking their breasts: and if the Jews and the whole of inanimate creation were overpowered by grief, shall thy heart alone remain harder than the rocks, and more obstinate than that stubborn Hebrew nation?

II. Consider that in dying for thy sins it was Jesus' intention not only that thou shouldst die to thy sins, by abhorring them with real and heartfelt grief, but also that thou shouldst make satisfaction for them to the justice of God: *Peccata nostra ipse pertulit in corpore suo . . . ut peccatis mortui justitie vivamus*—1 Pet.

ii. 24—*He His ownself bore our sins . . . that we being dead to sins should live to justice.* It is His Will that thou shouldst spend thy days in paying the debt thou hast contracted with the justice of God, inasmuch as Christ did not undergo His Passion and death of the cross simply that thou mightest escape all the penalties which are thy due, but with a view to their serving thee as an example of how thou mayest thyself cancel thy debts with Almighty God, and adorn thy sufferings, which of themselves are of no worth, with the precious gems of His merits: *Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum ut sequamini vestigia ejus*—1 Pet. ii. 21—*Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.* Look at thy crucified Jesus, and see what penance He has done for sins that were not His own; and what penance hast thou done hitherto for thy own many sins? Begin at least to-day to do penance, and make a firm purpose to continue to do so for the future.

III. Consider what the dying Jesus says to thee by the mouth of S. Paul: *Pro omnibus mortuus est Christus, ut qui vivunt jam non sibi vivant, sed ei qui pro ipsis mortuus est*—2 Cor. v. 15—*Christ died for all, that they also who live may not live now to themselves, but unto Him Who died for them.* Jesus expires on the cross, true God and true man, drowned, as it were, in an abyss of shame, and in a sea of bitterness and agony, to the end that when thou shalt have died to sin and risen to a life of grace, thou mayest by virtue of this His death no longer live to thy own comfort, to thy own whims and passions and unruly desires, but mayest live simply and solely for thy Saviour, Who ransomed thee from the eternal death of sin and punishment at the price of His own divine blood and of His infinitely precious life. This thou must bring about by resigning thyself entirely to the dispositions of Providence, and by making use of all thy powers and senses in Christ's

honour, so as ever to be ready to give thy blood and life for Jesus. And, as a matter of fact, is it not just that thou, the least and meanest of His servants, shouldst live and die for Jesus, Who has gone so far as to spend His whole life in promoting thy welfare, and even to die for thee?

HOLY SATURDAY.

Accepto corpore Joseph involvit illud in sindone munda, et posuit illud in monumento suo novo quod exciderat in petrâ.—Matth. xxvii. 59, 60.

And Joseph, taking the body, wrapped it up in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new monument which he had hewed out in a rock.

I. CONSIDER what a great change came about at the death of Jesus : for if at His birth He had not even a roof under which to take shelter, and if during His lifetime He was in want of the necessary food to allay His hunger, and even when dying on the cross was refused a drop of water wherewith to quench His thirst, now, on the contrary, no sooner is He dead than nothing is wanting to Him : neither the affection and tears of friends, nor the attendance and homage of His disciples, nor the honours of embalmment, nor the grandeur of a costly vault : *Et erit sepulcrum ejus gloriosum—Isa. xi. 10—His sepulchre shall be glorious.* Such is the way in which Providence generally deals with men. Just as worldly riches disappoint and leave unprovided at the hour of death those who in life abounded in them, so also those become the richest at the hour of death who in life were the most attached to poverty and privation. To be paid no attention to

in life, to be hated and persecuted, is a presage of being thought much of in death, of being then envied and honoured. Happy art thou, if until the day of thy death thou livest clinging to the cross in poverty, in suffering, in scorn ! Oh, how far better off, how much happier wilt thou be on thy deathbed !

II. Consider the generosity of Joseph and Nicodemus, who, through fear of the Jews, had been until then only private followers of Christ ; and see how they now come forward courageously to unvail the body of Our Lord from the cross, and to pay Him their homage in the sight of all the people—for it is a peculiar effect of saints' deaths, and much more so, therefore, of Jesus' death, to beget feelings of piety and strength of mind. As soon as the sacred burden was lowered from the cross, it was received in the arms of the Virgin-Mother, so that that virginal shrine in which this precious body began its mortal course before entering into this world, might there also, on its departure, find its rest. But ponder here on the pangs of grief which reawoke in Mary's heart, on gazing into that corpse-like face, and beholding those mangled limbs of her beloved Son. Under the cross, she had already been pierced to her inmost soul by the very presence of her dying Jesus, and now that she contemplates Him dead in her lap, she felt a still keener sword of grief, as well from the presence of His corpse, so frightfully disfigured, as from the absence of His divine soul, which deprived her of the consolation of His sweet words and loving expressions. From thy heart, then, sympathise with the Blessed Virgin in the loneliness of the night that followed, but console thyself at seeing Jesus, though dead, again return to Mary's bosom ; for she is thus declared to be the channel and medium of all the good that comes to us. As the work of our redemption began from the Blessed Virgin, by her giving birth to our Redeemer, and

ended by His death, so also it must needs be that the first beginning of our life of grace must come through her, as also its happy accomplishment in eternal glory.

III. Consider that Our Lord was entombed in a new vault cut in the rock. This vault was sealed and guarded by soldiers, so that His resurrection might be altogether beyond the reach of doubt and all the more glorious. Such also ought thy heart to be, if thou wishest to keep thy crucified Jesus there worthily, and to share in His glorious triumph. It must be new, that is to say, stripped of all the vices of the old man : it must be firm as the rock in the good purposes made during these holy days, cut out and shaped by the chisels of mortification and penance, sealed and guarded by a strict watch over its affections, and by interior recollection. Thus will thy heart become a worthy resting-place for Jesus crucified, and thou wilt merit to partake of the glory of His resurrection.

EASTER SUNDAY.

Ego dormivi et soporatus sum, et exsurrexi.—Ps. iii. 6.
I have slept and have taken rest, and I have risen up.

I. CONSIDER how on Christ's breathing His last He at once went down to Limbo, where the souls of the holy fathers had been sighing for several thousand years for the coming of the Saviour to set them free from that dark prison and put them in possession of the enjoyment of the beatific vision. Our Lord could have caused them to go forth by the mere command of His tongue in the same way as He made Lazarus

come forth from the tomb. But as through His boundless love He chose to come on earth in person to redeem us, so also it was His Will to go in person to Limbo and gladden those blessed souls. Reflect then awhile on the joy and exultation of those holy fathers on beholding the clear vision of Christ's soul and divinity, which made them completely happy. What songs of praise and thanksgiving did they not sing for so great goodness ! Yet Our Lord shows still greater kindness towards thee in coming into thy heart in holy communion, that heart which is so darksome and where He has been so often unworthily treated. Indeed, Jesus went down to Limbo only in soul and divinity, without His body to gladden its godly prisoners, whereas He comes to thee in body, soul, and divinity, to sanctify thee both in body and soul.

II. Consider how the soul of Jesus, after having tarried in Limbo until the third day (as this was a sufficiently long period to prove the fact of His death), betook itself to the tomb, where His corpse remained untainted, in the company of that numerous band of holy fathers. There He showed them the many bruises and wounds on his pallid limbs, so that they might form some idea of the amount of suffering it had cost Him to free them from their dungeon and bestow on them eternal glory. At such a sight, oh what heartfelt expression of thanks and gratitude did they not put forth ! how grieved they were at not having had this example of suffering before their eyes in life, as thou hast, to urge them on to the desire of ever suffering more ! Learn then to avail thyself of Jesus' example, before it is too late, because if *opportuit Christum pati, et ita intrare in gloriam suam*—Act. xvii. 3—*Christ was to suffer and so enter into His glory*, how canst thou hope to be His companion in glory without being the sharer of His sufferings ?

III. Consider how no sooner had the soul of Jesus

re-entered His body than He was immediately endowed with the gifts of a glorified body, and He was clothed with such brightness and majesty that His sacred humanity will be for ever the greatest delight of the corporal senses of the blessed in heaven, as will His soul and divinity form the supreme beatitude of their mental faculties. He retains the scars of His wounds in His feet, hands and side, now brighter than the sun, to bear witness that His body, which on this day rose with so much majesty, is that same one which died on the cross, differing nothing in nature but only in glory. Congratulate Jesus on the glory He has won, for although this glory was due to Him from the first moment of His life, He nevertheless wished to gain it by the merit of much suffering, in order to allow thee to share in it in proportion as thou likenest thyself to Jesus in suffering during life. If then this be the case, urge thyself on as far as thou mayest to illtreat and mortify thy body; for the worse thou shalt have treated it in this life for God's sake, the more glorious wilt thou have it back again at the general resurrection, and the more like unto Christ Himself. *Si enim complantati facti sumus similitudinis mortis ejus, simul et resurrectionis erimus*—Rom. vi. 5—*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.*

EASTER MONDAY.

Secundum multitudinem dolorum meorum consolationes tuæ lætificaverunt animam meam.—Ps. xciii. 19.

According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul.

I. CONSIDER that it was only to be expected that Jesus when in glory should make His first appearance to the Blessed Virgin, and that she should thus share the joy of His resurrection before all others and more than all others, as she had had a larger share than all others in the grief and pain of His passion. The Blessed Virgin remained a day and two nights pierced to the very heart by continual grief at His death, but at the same time firm and unshaken in her faith in His resurrection. It is very likely that she was consoled beforehand by the Archangel Gabriel, by the tidings that she would shortly behold Him again risen from the dead. All eagerness with desire, she would from time to time repeat: *Exurge gloria mea; exurge psalterium et cithara*—Ps. lvi. 9—*Arise, O my glory; arise psaltery and harp.* This is the usual course followed by Almighty God before bestowing any singular favour on those He especially loves. He enkindles a lively desire in their hearts to receive this gift, and they fit themselves for it by fervent prayer. Learn hence that thou wilt never be worthy of any grace or chosen gift of heaven, unless thou nourishest a lively desire of it beforehand, and thus renderest thyself deserving of it.

II. Consider what was the joy of the mother at this glorious appearance. Her grief had been unutterable on Calvary at the sight of the sufferings and shameful treatment of her son on the cross: so also

was her joy unspeakable at beholding Him risen from the dead to an undying life of unfading beauty and glory. She at once cast herself at the feet of her son to tender to Him her tribute of adoration, but He with a tender embrace clasped her to His bosom, to afford her thus a warm reception in His own divine heart, and strengthened the faculties of her soul to enable her on so joyful a day to gaze on the brightness of His divinity. Congratulate her from thy heart, and beseech her to obtain for thee the happiness of rejoicing with her for ever in heaven.

III. Consider that at the appearance of Jesus the Blessed Virgin beheld also arrayed before her a countless host of holy souls, amongst whom were her spouse, S. Joseph, and her saintly parents, all of whom congratulated her and offered her their homage as to their queen. This band of the souls of the holy fathers was accompanied by several choirs of angels, who with heavenly harmony sang joyfully and exultingly : *Regina cæli lætare, Alleluja—Rejoice, O Queen of Heaven, Alleluja.* Reflect here, what feelings of joy and gladness must have been aroused in the Blessed Virgin's heart, and learn thence how abundantly Our Lord rewards even in this life—but much more in the next—those who have been His faithful companions on Calvary, all and each of whom may in all truth exclaim—*Secundum multitudinem dolorum meorum, consolationes tuæ lætificaverunt animam meam.—According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul.*

EASTER TUESDAY.

Jesum quæritis Nazarenum crucifixum : Surrexit, non est hic.—Marc. xvi. 6.

You seek Jesus of Nazareth Who was crucified : He is risen, He is not here.

I. CONSIDER how the holy women were the first to learn from the angels' lips the tidings of Christ's resurrection. This signal favour, however, they deserved ; for, not content with having followed Jesus to Calvary and accompanied Him to the tomb, they had returned betimes to honour His sacred corpse again by embalming it, without allowing themselves to be overcome either by the difficulty of removing the stone slab or by fear of the soldiers on guard. See here how thou hast to obtain especial graces from Almighty God : thou must never be satisfied with what thou hast done in God's service, but exert thyself to serve Him daily with ever-increasing fervour, and to practise continually fresh acts of ever greater virtue. *Quæ retro sunt obliviscens, ad ea quæ sunt priora extendens meipsum*—Philipp. iii. 13—*Forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before.* This however thou hast always to carry into execution with fitting subordination to obedience and regular observance, in imitation of these holy women who fulfilled the observance of the Sabbath. But what favours canst thou hope for if thou rather growest cold than otherwise in thy fervour in God's service ?

II. Consider the steadfast fervour of Magdalene, so enamoured of Jesus even when in the tomb. The angel bade her not to search after her risen Lord amongst the dead, and nevertheless she lingers about

the spot, and continues untiringly to make every possible endeavour to find Him. She is asked by two angels of matchless beauty why she weeps — *Quid ploras?* but she does not dry up her tears, because she finds not her beloved. In a word, the soul that really loves Jesus cannot remain without Him : no creature whatsoever is able to satisfy her, she knows no other desire. But oh, how well did not Jesus gratify her desires when He first of all showed Himself to her in the disguise of a gardener, and afterwards when He called her by her own name and discovered Himself to her, and flooded her soul with rapturous delight ! Oh, how well are the tears rewarded and the painstaking recompensed of one who desires nothing else, seeks nothing else, and loves nothing else but Jesus ! Beseech the Saint to obtain for thee this engrossing love, so that thou mayest have no other aim in the whole of thy life than to remain in the presence of Jesus by continual acts of love.

III. Consider how after Our Lord had appeared to Magdalene, He appeared to the other holy women also, who had come to the tomb, at the same time allowing them to kiss His sacred feet, which favour He had not shown to Magdalene. Thus did Our Lord by delay increase their spiritual consolation, and reward their devout piety in wishing to embalm His corpse. In a word, Jesus is a master Who never lets Himself be outdone in kind attention, nor canst thou offer one single act of homage without receiving, even in this life, abundant reward. Here, then, thou seest how these holy women were rewarded for their fervent piety by becoming bearers of the good tidings of the resurrection to the disciples, and, in a certain sense, apostles to the Apostles themselves : *Ite nuntiate fratribus meis—Go and tell My brethren.* Canst thou help feeling thy heart melted to tenderness on hearing Jesus address His disciples, with His own lips,

with the honourable title of brethren? Endeavour to imitate His conduct, and be His brother, not in name only, but in holiness of life.

WEDNESDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

Exiit ergo Petrus et ille alius discipulus, et venerunt ad monumentum.—Joan. xx. 3.

Peter therefore went out, and that other disciple, and they came to the sepulchre.

I. CONSIDER how the tidings of the holy women, that Christ had risen, were held by the Apostles generally as the ravings of a heated imagination. But Peter and John, with greater prudence, determined to search into the truth of their statement, and ran together to the sepulchre. John arrived there the first, but he did not enter the sepulchre, giving precedence to Peter as head of the Church, without taking into consideration either his own deserts, on account of his having been faithful to Jesus on Calvary, or the undeservingness of Peter for having denied Him. A like respect ought every religious to show to his superior, however imperfect: not looking at his faults, but rather to the rank he holds as head and as representative of the person of Christ in his regard. Oh, how easy a thing it is for one who is intent on discovering and criticising the imperfections of his superiors, to lose that esteem and respect he owes them!

II. Consider how whilst Peter was standing on one side, full of awe at having found the tomb open and empty, Jesus appeared before him risen again to life. Here reflect with what confusion and shame he cast himself at His feet, and with how many tears he craved

His pardon for having denied Him. But Jesus consoles him with the utmost kindness, and bids him strengthen His disciples in their belief of His resurrection. Peter was the first man who saw Christ after His resurrection, and Magdalene was, after His Blessed Mother, the first woman, both penitents, to give the sinner to understand that he may hope to be favoured by Our Lord even more than the innocent, if only he makes his past trespasses the occasion of serving Him with greater fervour and humility. On the other hand, it may happen that one who is innocent of great crimes may remain far behind many a penitent sinner, by reason of the slackness with which he moves forward on the path of perfection and strives to acquire virtue.

III. Consider how on Peter's acquainting the other Apostles of the appearance of Christ, which had been vouchsafed to him, that same news was at once received by all as undoubted which had been looked upon as an idle story when conveyed to them by the women : *Surrexit Dominus vere, et apparuit Simoni*—*The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon* :—so great from the very beginning was the authority and weight of the testimony of Peter, the head of the Church—although he had not then been declared by Christ to be His Vicar on earth. All the faithful who are true to the Church have ever shown this readiness in yielding to the authority of the Vicars of Christ, Peter's successors, in matters of faith or moral guidance, in the path of virtue. In like manner, whosoever would make sure of walking in the path of the perfection he professes as a religious, must practise a like readiness in bending to the authoritative behests of his superiors. Examine thyself a little, and see how thou behavest in this respect.

THURSDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

Duo ex illis ibant ipsa die in castellum . . . nomine Emmaus.—Luc. xxiv. 13.

Two of them went the same day to a town . . . named Emmaus.

I. CONSIDER the imperfection of these two disciples, who being still oppressed with grief at the death of Christ, betake themselves to the town to seek for consolation from creatures, whereas this comfort was to be obtained from Almighty God alone. Still more imperfect did they show themselves in their faith, in distrusting the redemption they had so much longed after, because they had seen their Redeemer die on the cross. Anyhow, Our Lord went along with them, disguised as a pilgrim, by reason of their imperfect faith. Still the love they bore Him in their heart made them speak of His virtues and His sufferings in their discourse. Oh, how much holy conversation helps to our spiritual profit! and what harm, on the contrary, is done to the souls of religious by idle gossip about the vanities of the world! It ought to be enough for thee to know that as Christ is to be found in the company of those who make it a practice to speak about holy and profitable things—*in medio eorum ibi sum*—Matth. xviii. 20—*there am I in the midst of them*, so also it may be said that the devil is to be found in the midst of those who lose their time in idle conversation, and who make it their business to criticise and grumble.

II. Consider how Our Lord, with a view to enlighten them and correct their misconceptions, lovingly asked them about what they were talking. They had lain under the impression that Christ would have come on earth to free His people from the power of the Romans,

and to enrich them with the goods of this world ; they did not realise that His mission was to set them free from the slavery of sin, and fit them for the enjoyment of the goods of the next world by the merits of His death. He sharply chid them for such mistaken notions : *O stulti et tardi corde ad credendum !* — *O foolish and slow of heart to believe !* These same mistaken notions, however, are common to the greater part of mankind, whose aim is to enjoy the goods of this world : their anxiety is simply to shun present evil, and they take no pains to avoid future care, or to merit eternal happiness ; hence they little value the cross and passion of Christ, which He meant to be the means of purchasing for them eternal happiness, and of rescuing them from eternal woe. Keep thy mind's eye fixed on what is to come, and will last for ever : and thus thou wilt hold the cross of Christ in greater esteem, and wilt encourage thyself to embrace it, and to suffer in this life together with Christ.

III. Consider that as Christ feigned to be bent on continuing His journey, the two disciples obliged Him to tarry with them in their lodging, serving Him at table ; and in the act of exercising this work of love, they were enlightened, and recognised in their guest the person of Christ. See here the way pointed out to thee for obtaining special lights and favours from Our Lord—namely, the exercise of works of virtue, and in particular of charity. Thou hast not the good fortune of serving and feeding Christ in person ; but bear in mind that what thou dost in thy neighbour's behalf for Christ's sake, he owns it and rewards it as done to Himself in person ; and therefore when He gives thee Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, He will not fail to enlighten thee and nourish thy soul, as happened to these two disciples,

who recognised Him in the breaking of bread : *Cognoverunt eum in fractione panis.*

FRIDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

Cum sero esset et fores essent clausæ, ubi erant discipuli congregati, venit Jesus—Joan. xx. 19.

When it was late . . . and the doors were shut where the disciples were gathered together . . . Jesus came.

I. CONSIDER how Our Lord, after He had risen from the dead, deferred appearing to the Apostles until evening, they in the meanwhile remaining in great distress at His death, and shut up in the supper-room through fear of the Jews. It was His wish that they should hear the tidings of His resurrection beforehand, from different quarters, and so dispose themselves to believe so great a mystery. This is the usual way in which Divine Providence is wont to act—to put off the bestowal of graces that we may be more fitted and better disposed to receive them. Thou oftentimes complainest at not obtaining so soon as thou wouldst, some favour thou seekest for from Almighty God ; but thou complainest wrongfully, because this delay is itself a favour in thy regard, for which thou oughtest to be grateful. It is a sign that thou art not yet worthy of it, and enables thee to dispose thyself to obtain it in greater fulness by removing the obstacles created by thy inordinate affections, and by exercising thy humility, faith and perseverance in asking ; which not unfrequently is a source of greater benefit to thee than the favour thou seekest.

II. Consider that Our Lord entered the supper-

room suddenly with the door shut, and placing Himself in the midst of the Apostles, gave them tidings of peace and strengthened them so as not to feel any fear: *Pax vobis—Ego sum, nolite timere—Peace be to you—it is I, fear not.* See here the way in which Christ makes triumphant entrance into a soul. He does not take up His abode with him who keeps the doors of his senses thrown wide open, by allowing free entrance to every object, to every thought and every earthly and worldly affection; but He comes to him who keeps his heart well guarded, and shut to creatures in order to entrust it to the keeping of his God, his Creator and Redeemer. In such a heart as this Jesus takes up His abode, becoming the centre of all his thoughts and affections, and the end of all the actions of his life: bestowing upon him the enjoyment of true peace and security against all the assaults of his foes. If thou desirest Jesus to come into thy heart and make it truly peaceful, do thy utmost to keep the doors of thy senses and of thy mental powers shut to the world.

III. Consider that at the sudden appearance of Jesus risen from the dead, the Apostles were quite frightened and dismayed, thinking it was some apparition. But in order to calm down their fears and give them an assurance of His resurrection, Our Lord allowed them to examine the scars which He kept in His hands and feet, and thus proved to them that His body was a real body, and His resurrection a real fact, driving away from their hearts all fear and dread. What a wholesome remedy it is when thou wouldst soothe thy troubled heart or cheer thy drooping spirits, when thy mind is overspread with darkness, to fly to Jesus' feet and gaze upon those wounds which He received on the cross for thy ransom, and still keeps in His glorified body for thy shelter and refuge. They are those living springs ever gushing forth in thy

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behalf, where thou mayest find light, relief and comfort in thy needs.

SATURDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

Ascenderunt in navim, et illa nocte nihil prendiderunt : Dicit eis : Mittite in dexteram navigii—Joan. xxi. 3.

They entered into the ship ; and that night they caught nothing He saith to them : Cast the net on the right side of the ship.

I. CONSIDER how at the invitation of S. Peter, all go fishing together, thus maintaining the bond of mutual union so earnestly recommended to them by their Lord, and so praiseworthily sought after in religious communities. They cast their nets all the night long, but without catching even one little fish. Alas ! all their toil and labour is thrown away for nothing. But how far more unprofitably has all that toil and labour been expended which thou hast bestowed in fishing after some honour, charge or caprice ! When thou quittest the sea of this life thou wilt then become painfully aware that thou hast caught simply nothing, thus verifying in thyself that saying of the prophet : *Labores populorum ad nihilum et gentium ad ignem—Jerem. li. 58—The labours of the people shall come to nothing, and of the nations shall go to the fire. Ad nihilum—to nothing ;* that is to say, as far as merit is concerned, they are lost for ever. *Ad ignem—to the fire,* because of the punishment which will remain to be undergone in the fire of hell. Reflect on all thou hast hitherto done to satisfy thy whims without any lasting benefit, and so thou wilt say with the prophet :

Ego vidi paupertatem meam—Thren. iii. 1—*I am the man that see my poverty.*

II. Consider that no sooner had Christ appeared to His Apostles, in an unknown guise on the sea-shore, where they were engaged in fishing, than He asked them if they had caught any fish : and on hearing that they had not, He bade them cast their nets on the right side of the boat, when they at once took an abundant draught of fish. By this plenteous draught Our Lord wished to foreshadow to His Apostles the number of souls they would gain over, when they were sent by Him to preach His Name and His Gospel truths ; but at the same time He wished to point out to all of us what an immense amount of merit may be gained by one who exerts himself and toils in whatever obedience requires of him, with an upright intention and a view to please Almighty God alone. Well for thee if thy undertakings and labours have ever been performed through obedience, and with an upright intent on ; and not from unworthy motives, nor to carry out thy own will.

III. Consider that after this wonderful draught of fishes, S. John at once became aware that it was Our Lord Who had bidden them cast their nets on the right-hand side, and S. Peter forthwith plunged into the water and swam ashore, in order to throw himself at His feet. Remark here, how that it is the privilege of the innocent to receive, like S. John, from Almighty God a greater share of His heavenly lights and favours, so also is it the character of the sincerely penitent to lend themselves generously, like S. Peter, to the labours of penance, to render themselves worthy of finding Christ, and bind themselves to His service to be never again separated from Him. Hast thou perchance withdrawn thyself from Christ to pander to thy own evil inclinations ? Then thou must do violence to

thyself, and overcome the difficulties thou encounterest in order to draw near to Him and to find Him.

LOW SUNDAY.

Dicit Thomæ : Infer digitum tuum huc, et vide manus meas, et affer manum tuam, et mitte in latus meum—
Joan. xx. 27.

He saith to Thomas : Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it in My side.

I. CONSIDER that either by accident or through negligence, Thomas was not in the supper-chamber when Our Lord appeared to the Apostles the first time, and through being away from the rest he lost the consolation of beholding his Divine Master. Neither could he be induced to believe the mystery of His resurrection ; and although they all bore witness to the fact with one accord, he persisted in not wishing to give his assent unless he saw Christ risen with his own eyes, and touched Him with his own hands. What great losses this absence from the supper-room brought upon Thomas ! and yet no less injury do those inflict upon themselves who, whilst living in a religious community, take the liberty of absenting themselves from the common observances, and estrange themselves from the ways of thinking of the rest, thus hardening their own perverse judgment. Uniformity of life and harmony of will and desires is the very soul of the religious life, as, on the contrary, differences and discord are its destruction. How far dost thou conform thyself to the customs and sentiments of the community ?

II. Consider the exceeding goodness of Our Divine

Master, Who consented to appear to S. Thomas in the presence of all, to the end that they might be as edified at his repentance as they had been shocked at his bad example. He neither scolds him nor blames him with harsh words, but corrects him with the greatest sweetness : *Noli esse incredulus, sed fidelis—Be not faithless, but believing.* And with exceeding condescension invites him not only to look at, but also to touch His wounds, as was his desire, in order to assure himself of the reality of His resurrection. Hard-heartedness is more readily softened by the warmth of love than by the chill of severity, and more souls are won over by pleasing ways than by harsh manners. This is the proper way, and the only way in which thou oughtest to deal with thy neighbour.

III. Consider how thoroughly Thomas humbled himself and made good his error, exclaiming : *Dominus meus et Deus meus—My Lord and my God.* He openly proclaims Him to be man, and at the same time God, by recognising His assumed humanity in which He died, and His Divinity which raised Him to life again. We know not if Thomas really did touch Our Lord's wounds, and put his hand in His side as He was invited to do. But this is certain, that the wound of the side inflamed the Apostle's breast with zeal and love for the honour of God ; the wounds in the hands armed him with weapons to fight for Our Lord's glory, even to the shedding of his blood ; and the wounds in the feet gave him strength to betake himself to the farthest boundaries of the East for the salvation of souls. Do thou likewise approach these wounds of thy Redeemer, which He still keeps open on thy behalf, and they will prove to thee so many sources of light, comfort, and salvation.

MONDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

Quæ est vita vestra ? Vapor ad modicum apparens, et deinceps exterminabitur.—Jacob. iv. 15.

What is your life ? It is a vapour, which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away.

I. CONSIDER there is nothing less substantial or more unstable than vapour, which vanishes out of sight with the slightest breath of wind. Such is the life of man. *Vapor est—it is a vapour.* How many mishaps may deprive thee of it, when thou least expectest it—a sunstroke, accidental suffocation, the bite of a venomous reptile, and a thousand other accidents still less uncommon! How comes it, then, that thou lookest upon thyself almost as though thou wast to live for ever? *Diristi in sempiternum ero domina: neque recordata es novissimi tui*—Isa. xlvii. 7—*I shall be mistress for ever: thou hast not laid these things to thy heart, neither hast thou remembered thy last end.*

II. Consider that when vapour is borne aloft by the heat of the sun, it assumes at times the beautiful appearance of a parhelion or mock sun. But how long does it last? *Ad modicum—for a little while.* It cannot bear up its own weight, it presently sinks, and resolves itself into nothingness. Do not, then, lose sight of thy own nothingness, if just at present thou findest thyself perchance raised on high, either by reason of thy learning, or of noble extraction, or the authority thou wieldest. *Elevati sunt ad modicum, et non subsistent*—Job xxiv. 24—*They are lifted up for a little while, and shall not stand.* To-day on the lips of men, to-morrow in the grave: to-day beloved, esteemed, looked up to by all; to-morrow under the sod, the

food of disgusting worms. Oh, what an utter overthrow is that which threatens thee every moment ! How many great generals have existed, how many great princes, how many grandees, of whom there does not now remain even so much as a passing memory ! What, then, will be the fate of thee and of thy talents ?

III. Consider what madness, therefore, it is for thee to give thyself so much concern about a life that is so failing and frail, and to give so little heed to the future and never-ending life ! Imagine, for a moment, that there were two classes of persons in the world : some like ourselves, liable to die in a few years : others that were never to die. Oh, how these last individuals would deride the folly of the former, on beholding them straining every nerve to heap together the goods of this world ! Leave these things alone, would they say, for us to acquire, who will never quit this earth ; but do you prepare yourselves for death, and be content with what suffices to support this fleeting life. In sooth, not less worthy of derision are we poor creatures at this present time, although we mutually sympathise with one another in folly that is common to all.

TUESDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

Omnis sermo malus ex ore vestro non procedat ; sed sit bonus ad ædificationem fidei, ut det gratiam audientibus.
—Ephes. iv. 29.

Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth ; but that which is good to the edification of faith, that it may administer grace to the hearers.

I. CONSIDER that just as from the ticking of a clock one can tell at once whether it is going well or is out of order, so also from a man's words it can be known whether his interior dispositions are well ordered or vicious. *Loquela tua te manifestum facit* — Matth. xxvi. 73—*Thy speech doth discover thee.* For this reason it is that the Apostle, with great reason, warns each one of the faithful : *Omnis sermo malus ex ore vestro non procedat*—*Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth ;* because if thou breakest forth into words that betoken ambition and impatience, or givest utterance to biting, scornful, or haughty expressions, thou thereby givest unmistakable tokens of an ill-regulated interior. Now, if such language ought to be banished from the mouth of every Christian, how much more from thine, who art a religious ! Reflect on the faults thou committest with thy tongue, and strive to correct thyself by taking the necessary precautions : *Ori tuo facito ostia et seras* — Eccl. xxviii. 28—*Make doors and bars to thy mouth.* When doors have no locks upon them, it is a sign that they are not kept under custody. Do thou, therefore, keep a key for thy mouth, so that no word may come forth from it without thy leave.

II. Consider that as thou hast to keep guard over thy mouth, so as to hinder its uttering any word unbecoming thy profession, so also thou must open it at

fitting times to give utterance to holy discourse to the edification of thy hearers. Dost thou not profess, by renouncing the world, to be a citizen of paradise? How comes it, then, that thou art ashamed to make use of the language of heaven, thy fatherland, which ought to form the staple of thy conversation? Thou fearest, perchance, to fall a prey to vainglory by being looked upon as a spiritual man? Then set thy intention straight by having for thy only aim the good of thy neighbour, and not thy own esteem: *ad ædificationem fidei, ut det gratiam audientibus*—to the edification of faith, that it may administer grace to the hearers.

III. Consider what is the grace thou wilt administer by means of thy pious discourse. So great is the good holy conversation brings with it to every class of persons, whether religious or seculars, spiritual souls or sinners, that they very frequently penetrate the heart more deeply than any sermon, bringing the grace of compunction to the guilty, the grace of consolation to the well-disposed, and the grace of praising God to the perfect. Be, then, earnestly attached to these spiritual conversations, in so far as thy state of life requires it, and thy own weakness allows it, and by helping thy neighbour thou wilt still more further thy own interests.

WEDNESDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

Non sunt condignæ passiones hujus temporis ad futuram gloriam, quæ revelabitur in nobis.—Rom. viii. 18.

The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.

I. CONSIDER in what that money consists with which thou hast to purchase for thyself the glory of paradise.

It consists precisely in the sufferings of the present life—*passiones hujus temporis*. Sickness, poverty, disgrace, persecution, the inconveniences which thy state as a religious causes thee to feel—this is thy money. So that when thou regrettest these trials, thou rejectest that money which Almighty God gives thee, as to a poor beggar, to effect so great a purchase. Hast thou ever witnessed the anxiety with which the poor flock together to scramble and struggle for the pieces of coin a prince casts amongst the crowd, on occasions of public festivities? And wilt not thou take a single step to possess thyself of the trials Almighty God bestows upon thee, in order to enrich thee?

II. Consider that the sufferings thou endurest for God's sake are so much money wherewith to purchase paradise: but they are not a money that represent the real value of the object purchased, because in themselves they are not worth as much. For, after all, what proportion can there be between all the sufferings in the world and the glory of paradise? Even though there were no other disproportion than this, viz., that thy sufferings are limited to the span of this present life—*passiones hujus temporis*, whilst the glory to come has no end, what proportion can there be between time and eternity? no more than there is between the mathematical point of a circle's centre and its circumference. *In momento indignationis abscondi faciem meam parumper a te; et in misericordia æterna misertus sum tui*—Isa. liv. 8—*In a moment of indignation have I hid My face a little while from thee; but with everlasting kindness have I had mercy on thee.*

III. Consider that it may, perchance, seem hard to thee to suffer for the glory of the next world, because it is hidden from thee: but fear not, for before long *revelabitur—it shall be revealed*. If Our Lord were to raise for one moment that veil that hides it from thee, and allowed thee to gaze on just one ray of its bright-

ness, oh, how happy wouldst thou feel ! Thou wouldst hardly refrain from exclaiming with S. Francis : So great is the good that awaits me, that every pain and trouble delights me ! But before this glory can be revealed to thee, this present time must pass away, because it is a thing of the future and eternal. For the time being, thou must be content that it should be revealed to thee *in spe*—in hope only, and not *in re*—in reality ; for by suffering and labouring for this glory, which thou hopest to obtain through faith, thou wilt render thyself deserving of a greater share of it.

THURSDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

Alter alterius onera portate, et sic adimplebitis legem Christi—Gal. vi. 2.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ.

I. CONSIDER that this is one of the most necessary precepts of a religious life, to put up with one another's shortcomings. And yet it is this, perchance, which is least of all fulfilled, because to carry heavy burdens it requires great strength, and the generality of individuals are sickly and weak in spirit. If, therefore, thou wouldst know how to judge of thy strength, see how far thou art able to bear up with the burdens of others. If thou art able to bear up with them, thou art strong ; if not, thou art weak, and thou lovest a rich harvest of great merit.

II. Consider what these "one another's burdens" are that thou hast to carry. They are, in the first place, the defects of nature and character thou meetest

with in others. Natural defects are, by way of example, lowness of spirits, infirmities of body, ailings and such like. Defects of character are want of politeness, ingratitude, peevishness, sharp words, contradictions and the like—all of them burdens hard to bear up with. In the second place, thou must help to lighten the wants of thy neighbour, whether these wants be of body or of soul—coming to his aid as far as thou canst in his bodily needs, and more especially in his spiritual needs, by counselling him when in doubt, comforting him in temptation, consoling him in grief. In the third place, thou must also share the burdens thy neighbour has brought upon himself in the shape of penalties due for past sins, by praying for him, and undertaking fasts and disciplines in his behalf. However, the chief burden thou hast to put up with in community life, is that of the defects of nature and character thou noticest in thy brethren; but if thou reflectest on thy own shortcomings which others have to put up with in thee, thou wilt more readily find an excuse for the failings of others, and gain strength to bear with them in all kindness and patience.

III. Consider that this mutual forbearance with one another is the fulfilment of the law of Christ, because this law is wholly based upon love—not any love—but a love like unto that which Our Lord has shown towards us by commiserating our failings, by tending to our wants and atoning for our penalties. This is a law which is binding on all, but which few fulfil, because there are few who have the courage to bear their neighbours' burdens. Hence it is no wonder that even in the cloister, faults committed against charity are not rare. Do thou, therefore, endeavour all the more to keep perfect charity with all, as far as thou art concerned, and then thou wilt be all the more pleasing to Jesus: whereas, if thou art bent on retorting every little proud or angry word, and every

contradiction thou meetest with through the imperfection of others, the beautiful law of charity will fall to the ground by the bad example thou givest.

FRIDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

Ne verearis usque ad mortem justificari quoniam merces Dei manet in æternum—Eccle. xviii. 22.

Be not afraid to be justified even to death ; for the reward of God continueth for ever.

I. CONSIDER that one would naturally have thought that a reward so great and lasting as is that which Almighty God has in store for thee in Paradise, ought to have been won at the cost of enormous and everlasting toil and fatigue ; or at least, as this is impossible, after a great deal of labour and after a term of many ages ; and yet see how very short our life is, especially nowadays when the span of a man's life does not, as a rule, embrace so much as even sixty years, or if it reaches eighty years it is deemed a long life. And hast thou not the heart to toil even for so brief a period, to gain a blissful eternity ? Almighty God has in His great goodness made the life of man short, so that if he does not save his soul, he can have no grounds of complaint against his Maker. Oughtest thou not then to put up with every imaginable hardship, to thy very last breath, in order to gain so unspeakable a reward.

II. Consider that there are some who are so far from desiring to endure a life of labour until death, in order to gain Paradise, that in their opinion they are already doing too much to gain it, and they would almost seem ashamed to put any great amount of

diligence in the fulfilment of their charge, or in fully carrying out the obligations of their state of life as religious. Now, is not this a clear sign that they have a very low esteem of so great a Kingdom—of a Kingdom that has no end? When a reward that is trifling in itself, and of brief duration, is offered for an undertaking of great toil and labour, then, indeed, it is a pity to strain oneself to earn it: it would be imitating the spider that empties itself of its own substance in spinning a web to catch flies! Yet just such is the folly of a great many Christians who run the world over, and expose their lives to a thousand dangers, in war and in commerce, for a gain which consists in either a little empty smoke or a few base coins. How then canst thou think any labour or pains too great, when as a reward Our Lord holds out to thee the eternal possession of Himself, and in Himself of every possible good?

III. Consider that Ecclesiastes says : *Ne verearis usque ad mortem justificari*—*Be not afraid to be justified even to death*; meaning that thou must not shrink from daily advancing in perfection up to the very end of thy life, as though each day were that on which thou didst begin to serve Almighty God in religion. Yet how many in course of time seem ashamed to perform their actions with the fervour and attention they showed as fresh novices—just as though, forsooth! they had become holy enough! If thou discoverest thyself to be drawing nigh to the goal, so much the greater reason hast thou to make every effort to run on with at least the same eagerness as that with which thou didst leave the starting-point. But so far as thou art concerned, thou hast only to reflect, and thou wilt see how great need thou still hast of becoming holy! How many faults there are for thee to correct, in the face of which thou oughtest to reckon thyself less a beginner than a sinner! It behoves thee, therefore, to

avail thyself of the present time, as though thou wert making thy first endeavours to become good and holy : *Ne verearis usque ad mortem justificari*—be not afraid to be justified even to death.

SATURDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

Beatus vir cujus est auxilium abs te : ascensiones in corde suo disposuit, in valle lacrymarum in loco quem posuit.—Ps. lxxxiii. 6.

Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee : in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps in the vale of tears, in the place which he hath set.

I. CONSIDER that, hadst thou to attain to the perfection befitting thy state of life as a religious, by thy own efforts, thou wouldst have good reason to be downhearted : because of thyself thou canst do simply nothing. But thou must put thy trust in the help of God ; and whosoever has the arm of the Lord on his side, may confidently hope to attain to even a very high degree of perfection. The whole difficulty lies in this : wilt thou lay thyself open to receive this help ? For this end two things are requisite : firstly, that thou shouldst make up thy mind to be intimately persuaded of thy utter weakness, by reason of which thou art unable of thyself to take a single step forwards in the path of virtue ; and secondly, that thou shouldst oftentimes, and with earnestness, beg Almighty God for His aid, of which thou art so needy. Hitherto thou hast received little aid, because thou hast been little anxious to discharge these two duties. Begin at once to do so, and thou wilt find great good come to thee.

II. Consider that if thou wouldst attain religious perfection, thou canst not do so all at once, but step by step. Our Lord wishes that thou shouldst climb, not fly—*ascensiones disposuit*. The principal reason why so few succeed in becoming saints, is because they would fain find themselves all at once in the third heavens, with S. Paul. Now, Almighty God does not wish to do all Himself, but it is His Will that we should mount upwards by our own efforts, in order to give us something whereby to gain merit by the violence we do to ourselves, overcoming ourselves little by little, as a person does who is engaged in crossing a high mountain. Try, then, and do thy own part; begin to apply thyself with special intent to practise those virtues thou most of all lackest, first taking one step, then another: thou must needs climb, not fly.

III. Consider that it is indeed a toilsome and troublesome undertaking to climb after this fashion to the heights of perfection. But do not grow alarmed, because thy joy will be in proportion to the toil, thy reward commensurate with the trouble. Indeed, as regards joy, thou wilt have a foretaste of it even in this life, which is but a valley of tears, and for thy reward thou shalt possess the kingdom of heaven. Therefore be not discouraged, plod along perseveringly, and do not for an instant think of turning back. Above all, do not imitate the bad example of some who are ever wavering in the path of virtue they have undertaken, ever restless in that particular state or position in which God has placed them. If thou wouldst climb the ladder of perfection, thou must needs do so *in loco quem posuit*—that is to say, in that state, in that employment, to which Our Lord has called thee. Thou must, therefore, remain steadfast in it, and remember that two things will bring thee to perfection: the grace of God and thy own co-operation; but thou must put thy trust, not in thy own co-operation, but

wholly in the grace which Almighty God may deign to bestow on thee: *Confide in Domino, et mane in loco tuo*—Eccl. xi. 22—*Trust in God, and stay in thy place.*

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Ego sum Pastor bonus.—Joan. x. 11.
I am the Good Shepherd.

I. CONSIDER that the duties of a good shepherd are threefold: to guide, to feed, and to defend his sheep; and Jesus, Who is thy Shepherd, has discharged all three of these tasks in thy regard. For, firstly, He acts as thy guide in this desert-world, to ensure thy not wandering from the safe path which leads to the fold of eternal rest: *Ducam te per semitas æquitatis*—Prov. iv. 11—*I will lead thee by the paths of equity.* In order the better to fulfil the office of guide, the good shepherd goes in front of his sheep, and lets them follow behind; so also Christ points out to thee the true path of virtue by His own most holy example. Study the life of Christ in good earnest, and in every occurrence; thou wilt find there the pattern of that virtue thou hast to imitate in Him, whether it be humility, patience, charity, or meekness. What a wholesome exercise is this for thee, to fashion thy own life after the pattern that Jesus has given thee in His own actions! The sheep that follows closely in the footsteps of its shepherd is sure never to go astray!

II. Consider that Jesus, thy devoted Shepherd, not only acts as thy guide, but nourishes thee also with the truths of His holy gospel, and refreshes thee with His grace and spiritual consolations, and, in a manner still more excellent, with the Sacrament of the Altar.

Where, forsooth, will any shepherd be found who is so devoted to his flock, as to feed them with his own flesh and with his own blood? Yet Jesus does as much for thee; and wilt thou not accept this as a sufficient proof of the infinite goodness of thy Shepherd Jesus, and make it an effectual motive for refusing all other pastures, content and satisfied with that which thy Divine Saviour bestows on thee?

III. Consider that Jesus, like a good shepherd, defends thee, and that, too, much more effectually than shepherds are wont to defend their sheep. Every sheep of Christ's is assaulted by three strong foes: by the devil, who is like the ravenous wolf; by the cheating and chary world, and by the lurking thief of self-love. From the attacks of all and each of these does Jesus defend the sheep of His flock. In the first instance He generously encountered death on our behalf, and even now He protects His sheep in their struggles, giving them strength to overcome, so that by taking part in the strife they may merit the crown of triumph. Be, therefore, a faithful sheep of Christ's fold, by following in the footsteps of His example, by nourishing thyself with the food He so lavishly affords thee; and thus, under the protection of so good a Shepherd, thou wilt have nought to dread, from either the violence or the treachery of thy enemies. *Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?*—Rom. viii. 31—*If God be for us, who is against us?*

MONDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Ego sum ostium : per me si quis introierit salvabitur ; et ingredietur et egredietur, et pascua inveniet.—Joan. x. 9.

I am the door : by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved ; and he shall go in and go out, and shall find pastures.

I. CONSIDER that all men are desirous of discovering where happiness is to be found, though there are but few who succeed in discovering it. Many a sage and philosopher in ancient times professed to teach in what it consisted, and to be able to lead his followers to its attainment ; but it was a delusion, because they never got so far as even to find the gate of this blessed region, since Christ is the true and only Gate, Whom they either knew not or believed not. *Ego sum ostium*—*I am the Gate*, inasmuch as Christ alone can put thee in safety by rescuing thee from everlasting and unutterable woe, and put thee in possession of everlasting and infinite bliss. Oh, thrice happy art thou, if thou shalt be found worthy of being admitted by this Gate ! Meanwhile, thank thy Saviour from the bottom of thy heart, for having caused thee to be born without any deserts of thy own, at a time when the light shines so brightly as to enable thee to discover with the greatest ease the Gate unknown to so many others : *Ecce, dedi coram te ostium apertum*—Apoc. iii. 8—*Behold, I have given before thee a door opened.* If thou enterest not, so much the worse for thee.

II. Consider that, besides the perfect bliss of Paradise, there is an incomplete sort of happiness attainable

on earth, and which is that generally sighed after by the world at large. Of this bliss likewise is Christ the Gate, because there is not a living soul that experiences delights similar to those enjoyed by the true faithful of Christ: they are delights fit for angels, and which reside in those faculties we possess in common with the angels. *Per me si quis introierit . . . pascua inveniet*—*By Me if any man enter in . . . he shall find pastures.* Ah, what enchanting pleasure will not he taste who leaves not Jesus' side! *Beatus qui observat ad postes cœtii mei*—Prov. viii. 34—*Blessed is the man that watcheth daily at My gates.* Jesus is the Gate of Paradise, and he shall enjoy happiness who, though unable to enter within, shall at any rate linger at its threshold. Make up thy mind, then, to rest peacefully at the feet of Jesus crucified. There, at thy leisure, *ingredere et egredere*—*go in and go out*; that is, go in and meditate on Him as thy God: go out and gaze upon Him as thy Redeemer become man for thy sake; ponder on His goodness, His mercy, His sufferings, and His death on the cross, endured for love of thee. In this way thou wilt imitate to a certain degree what the blessed do in heaven.

III. Consider that the blessed in heaven enjoy their ravishing delights in proportion as they were assiduous on earth in seeking after the delights of the saints, by self-denial, obedience, humility, penance, and other like practices of mortification taught them by Jesus Christ. So, in thy own case, if thou wouldst enjoy bliss on earth—so far as it can be had—thou must needs make thy happiness consist in the diligent practice of these selfsame exercises, and keep close to the Crucified One. The greater use thou shalt make of these exercises of mortification and austerity, so much practised by the saints, the more abundant will be the consolation thou wilt receive at the foot of the crucifix in thy present condition of pilgrim and stranger, and

the more plentiful will be hereafter in heaven the bliss thou wilt enjoy as possessor and owner of thy End. Thus thou wilt be able to say with the Psalmist : *In loco pascuæ ibi me collocavit*—Ps. xxii. 2—*He hath set me in a place of pasture.*

TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Pepigi fœdus cum oculis meis ne cogitarem quidem de virgine ; quam enim partem haberet in me Deus desuper—Job xxxi. 1.

I made a covenant with my eyes that I would not so much as think upon a virgin ; for what part should God from above have in me ?

I. CONSIDER the determined resolution which Job made of keeping aloof from all incautious glances in order not to run the risk of eternal damnation, when he says he made a truce with his eyes to refrain them from resting on a virgin. But why saith he truce, and not peace ? It is to give thee to understand that those eyes of thine, which are so dear to thee, are thy deadliest foes, and as such, a truce may be established with them, but not peace. Never trust these enemies of thine, and never lay down thy arms, because they are traitors that are capable of bringing thy soul to a state of miserable slavery. What evils did not that glance which David cast on Bersabee bring upon him, and so also in the case of many others, well known in history ! And hast not thou, then, as great reason to fear for thyself, who art so miserable and weak ?

II. Consider why Job says that he made a truce with his eyes not to think of a virgin, instead of saying, not to look at a virgin—*ut ne cogitarem quidem de virgine*. But he expresses himself thus, inasmuch as it is the eyes that are wont to make entrance for the thought into the mind, and to give thee to understand, firstly, that thinking and looking are all one ; at any rate certain it is that no sooner has the eye seen than the thought follows, and they always go together : so that in reality the expression, *ut ne cogitarem quidem*—not even to think of, comes to mean : *ut ne aspicerem quidem*—not even to look at. Secondly, he gives thee to understand of what sort of looks he here speaks. He alludes not to those accidental glances when the eye happens to fall on dangerous objects, but of the fixed gaze which is wilful. We say that the mind sees a thing when it applies itself designedly to think on it ; and so also the eyes may be said to think of an object when they are applied purposely to consider it : *Verumtamen oculis tuis considerabis*, says the Psalmist—Ps. xc. 8—*But thou shalt consider with thy eyes*. These, then, are the looks that are hurtful to the soul. What art thou accustomed to do when thy eyes happen to light on a dangerous object ? Dost thou keep them there, or dost thou lower them on the instant to the ground ? If thou wilfully continuest to gaze, thou committest cruel havoc in thy soul.

III. Consider the great harm such looks may bring upon thee : they are quite enough to bring about a complete severance of those ties that bind thee to Almighty God ; because such looks as these are followed by bad thoughts that drive Him from thy mind ; these in their turn are followed by sensual gratification, which takes from Him the dominion over thy animal appetite ; and finally follows consent, which withdraws thy will from its allegiance to Him : and then, pray, what remains of thee over which Almighty God thy

Sovereign Master may exercise His sway ? Oh how necessary, then, it is that thou shouldst beware of thine eyes, those deadly enemies of thine, and not allow them any occasion for waging war against thee, lest thou have to bewail their ravages in the words of the prophet : *Oculus meus depredatus est animam meam*—Thren. iii. 51—*My eye hath wasted my soul.*

WEDNESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Qui te beatum dicunt, ipsi te decipiunt, et viam gressuum tuorum dissipant—Isa. iii. 12.

They that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee, and destroy the way of thy steps.

I. CONSIDER to what all the benefit that can accrue to thee from the praise of men, is reducible. They can but call thee blessed, without however being able to make thee so. In very truth thou art just what thou art in the sight of God—and nothing more. If in His eyes thou art mean and miserable, and poverty-stricken, what good will it do thee if the world judges thee to be the contrary ? Oh how great is thy folly to run so eagerly after that bright bubble—praise ! Every one may flatter thee to thine heart's content ; but *non potest adjicere ad staturam tuam*—they cannot add to thy stature—I will not say one cubit—no, not even one inch.

II. Consider that the praise of thy fellow-creatures not only does thee no good, but inflicts a grievous injury on thee ; because it robs thee of the true knowledge of thyself : *Ipsi te decipiunt*—*They deceive thee by*

causing thee to believe thyself to be what thou art not, by hiding thy faults or keeping them in the background, or glossing them over, even going so far as to praise as virtue in thee, what ought to have been reproved as vice. Wilt thou, notwithstanding, persist in courting and loving those who play thee so treacherous a part?

III. Consider that the flatterer, besides depriving thee of the knowledge of thyself, and of thy faults, does thee great harm in another way, by causing thee to wander from the high road of humility: *Viam gressuum tuorum dissipant—They destroy the way of thy steps.* This is the road which Jesus trod, and which every soul especially loved by God, has trodden, following in Jesus' footsteps; this road must thou also needs tread if thou wouldst happily reach the same destination. Now, the flatterer breaks up and spoils this road of humility, because he is the cause of thy first of all conceiving a great esteem of thyself, and then of looking down upon thy neighbour: thou in consequence resentest every little word, thou fallest off in ready submission to thy superior, thou beginnest to aspire after higher places and offices—in a word, thou becomest proud. Oh what a falling off is this! its consequences are not to be described! Renounce, therefore, resolutely all praise whatsoever, and be determined never to seek it in thy actions; and if at times it will pursue thee, do thy best to ward it off by changing the topic of conversation. Above all, accustom thyself to desire in all that concerns thee, the approval of that Lord and Master only, Whose approval alone can make thee truly blessed.

THURSDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Si quis vestrum indiget sapientia, postulet a Deo qui dat omnibus affluenter, et non improperat, et dabitur ei. Postulet autem in fide nihil hesitans—Jac. i. 5.

If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, Who giveth to all men abundantly and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.

I. CONSIDER that the wisdom thou most needest, consists in knowing how to regulate thyself well in all that concerns thy state of life, thy particular occupations, thy ministry, and thy welfare generally. Doubt not but that thou art sure to obtain this wisdom from Almighty God, if thou seekest it from Him : *Pete ab eo, ut vias tuas dirigat*—Job iv. 20—*Desire of Him to direct thy ways.* Prayer is a certain means of enlightenment, since Almighty God gives to all abundantly—*dat omnibus affluenter*—provided only He be entreated. *Cum ignoremus quid agere debeamus, hoc solum habemus residui, ut oculos nostros dirigamus ad te*—2 Paral. xx. 12—*As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to thee.* How far art thou careful to have recourse to God in thy doubts, to be enlightened and directed ?

II. Consider that in order to be sure of obtaining this wisdom, thou must petition for it, lovingly and perseveringly ; lovingly, that is to say, begging for it in virtue of the promises so often repeated by the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures—*Postulet in fide* ; perseveringly, that is to say, not giving over asking, however much thou appearest to remain unheard—*nihil hesitans*. Hold it as certain that thou wilt obtain if thou dost not give over asking—*nihil hesitans*—because it is not

in the worth of thy own poor and faulty prayers that thou hast to trust, but in the worth of the solemn promise of God Almighty.

III. Consider that thy want of perseverance in prayer usually proceeds from a want of confidence—from a certain wavering in thy hope of obtaining what thou askest; and therefore thy confidence *simi is est fluctui maris qui a vento movetur*—is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried away by the wind. Thou continuest to pray and ask for a time, and then thou givest over for a time. This is the right way to obtain nothing, because Our Lord wishes our confidence in Him to be unailing, and that we should go on entreating Him *sine intermissione*, even when we are not heard: He puts off granting His favours in order to try if we trust Him as much as we ought. What merit would there be in thy prayer, if thy petition were granted at the first word uttered? Thou wouldst in that case ask *nihil hæsitans*—without hesitation, it is true, but not *in fide* with humble confidence. To deserve to be heard thou must be content to see thy earnest suit rejected, and still repeat it over and over again, in imitation of the Canaanitish woman, who at length deserved to hear: *O mulier, magna est fides tua, fi tibi sicut vis*—Matth. xv. 28—*O woman, great is thy faith—be it done to thee as thou wilt!*

FRIDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

In hoc cognoscent omnes, quia discipuli mei estis, si dilectionem habueritis ad invicem.—Joan. xiii. 35.

By this shall men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.

I. CONSIDER what is the distinctive mark by which Our Lord has wished His disciples to be recognised : it is not the gift of working miracles, nor is it learning nor any other of the prerogatives conferred upon them, but it is mutual love. But this love must needs be far greater than that which we see exist amongst those who are not the followers of Christ, because in His intention it has to be a badge—a means sufficient in itself to cause His disciples to be known as such, at all times and in all places, and by every one. Thinkest thou that thy charity, thy brotherly love, is such that, amongst all thy other virtues, it enjoys the privilege of discovering thee to be a follower of Christ ?

II. Consider that this behest of Our Lord was exceedingly well carried out by the first Christians : and hence, as Tertullian narrates, the pagans in conversation amongst themselves frequently remarked : *Videte quomodo se invicem, diligunt !*—See how fond they are of one another ! They were all knit closely together by unity of faith in their understanding, and in their will by unity of desires and unity of action : *Cor unum et anima una*—Act. iv. 32—*They had but one heart and one mind.* They exercised acts of such heroic charity, not only towards themselves, but also towards their persecuting enemies, that no other sect can boast the like. Nowadays, this charity is in great measure cooled down amongst the faithful, and hell exerts its

utmost endeavours to destroy it altogether : and therefore there is all the greater need that it should flourish more vigorously amongst the members of religious orders, where all and each profess, by embracing the evangelical counsels, to imitate more closely the lives of the first Christians. But what should we say or think, if even amongst religious there should be found no traces of this distinctive mark of Christ's followers ? Examine thyself awhile, and see how far thou exertest thyself to maintain both towards thy brethren and thy neighbour generally, *unitatem spiritus in vinculo pacis*—Eph. iv. 3—*unity of spirit in the bond of peace.*

III. Consider what it is that causes us to lose this sincere love, so earnestly enjoined by Our Lord. The cause is, because we do not love Our Lord Himself as we ought. Apply to thyself what thou seest in a circle : the nearer the radii approach their centre, the closer they are to one another ; and in proportion as they recede from the centre, so also they become more distant from each other. If we were all united in Jesus, striving to please Him in everything, and to refer all honour to Him, we should all be most intimately united amongst ourselves. But because our love of Jesus is very languid, it is no wonder that our love of one another should be very feeble also. Make, therefore, an effort to acquire an ardent love for Jesus, and for love of Him thou wilt then love thy neighbour also : for this it is that He desires of thee more than anything as a proof of thy love for Himself.

SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Ego sum vitis, vos palmites : qui manet in me, et ego in eo, hic fert fructum multum ; quia sine me nihil potestis facere.—Joan. xv. 5.

I am the vine ; you the branches : he that abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same beareth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.

I. CONSIDER that Christ calls Himself a vine, and us the branches, in order that we might realise thereby that we stand in as great need of Him as the vine-branch does of its stock. But as there are three sorts of vine-branches : some that are cut off ; others that are united to the stock, though dead ; and others that are full of sap ; so also amongst men, some are like lopped-off branches—and these are heretics and infidels, doomed to the flames ; others are withered branches united to Christ's mystical body—and these are they who adhere to Him by faith but not by grace, and derive from Him no life-giving sap to enable them to bring forth fruit ; others are live branches that cling to Him by faith and at the same time by love, and who, by opening their hearts to His life-giving grace, bring forth fruits of life eternal. Ponder, awhile, how necessary it is for thee to remain intimately united to Christ, if thou wouldst be a fruitful branch and not wither away and die.

II. Consider that the vine-branch derives from its stock, not only the aptitude for bearing fruit, but, moreover, the very process by which the fruit is produced, inasmuch as the stock itself co-operates by its life-giving sap. In like manner, Christ not only makes

us capable of bringing forth fruit unto life eternal, but invigorates the very exercise of our faculties by the concurrence of His grace, because without Him we can do nothing—*sine me nihil potestis facere*. Oh, if thou wouldst once for all master this truth, namely, that of thyself thou canst not perform even the slightest good action, unless Almighty God enables thee to do it, and follows thee up in each stage of thy action by His assistance—if, I say, thou couldst once for all master this truth, how thoroughly wouldst thou humble thyself for thy own nothingness ! and how sincerely thou wouldst annihilate thyself from the depths of thy heart, in His presence yearning to be closely united to Him !

III. Consider how, although Almighty God gives us the strength necessary to act, it is still His Will that His own gifts should be our merits by which we are to win our own crown, and for this end He has endowed us with liberty, to act like beings gifted with reason. True it is that the proper use of our liberty is entirely His own gift, nor ought we to pride ourselves on anything at all, but refer all the glory to Him alone : so, again, if we make ill use of our liberty, the fault is all our own, because it is we that change the wholesome sap of the stock at one time into inferior fruit—at another into bad fruit. Keep, then, these two maxims deeply engraven in thy heart : firstly, that all the good thou doest comes from God, Who gives the grace not only to wish to do good, but to execute it as well : secondly, that if thou dost ill thou art the cause, by resisting grace with thy own free will. Thus wilt thou avoid two mistakes, the one of those who deny the efficacy of grace, and attribute the good they do to themselves : the second of those who deny the liberty of man's will, and attribute the evil he does to Almighty God. Never cease to beg Almighty God most earnestly for the grace, first of

all of recognising that any good thou canst do, must come from God: *Sine me nihil potestis facere*; and secondly, of corresponding to, and co-operating with, His grace by overcoming thyself: *Viriliter age, et confortare, et fac*—1 Paralip. xxviii. 20—*Act like a man, and take courage, and do.*

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Modicum et jam non videbitis me, et iterum modicum et videbitis me.—Joan. xvi. 16.

A little while and now you shall not see Me, and again a little while and you shall see Me.

I. CONSIDER that when Jesus was just about to enter upon His passion, He said to His Apostles: *Modicum et jam non videbitis me*—*A little while and you shall not see Me*; calling short all that period of suffering, and little all that overwhelming accumulation of torments which was compared by the prophets at one time to a sea, at another to an abyss, and again, to a deluge of suffering: *Veni in altitudinem maris*—Ps. lxxviii. 3—*I am come into the depth of the sea. Inundaverunt aquæ super caput meum*—Thren. iii. 54—*Waters have flowed over my head. Abyssus vallavit me*—Joan. ii. 6—*The deep hath closed me round about.* And why did He speak in this way? Doubtless to show that His sufferings, great as they were, seemed little to Him, through the love He bore thee. Hence He often called His passion a chalice, as though it had been in His eyes no more than a mere draught. *Inundationem maris quasi lac suget*—Deut. xxxiii. 19—*He shall suck as milk the abundance of the sea.* With thee it is just the reverse: every little trial thou hast to undergo in Jesus' service,

appears to thee excessive—every drop is magnified into a sea : and why ?—because thou hast not in thy heart a sterling love for Almighty God. The real love of Jesus consists not in tenderness of feelings, but in sharing the bitterness of His cross and embracing suffering cheerfully ; since to love, and to suffer for the loved one, ought to be synonymous.

II. Consider that when Jesus said to His Apostles : *Et iterum modicum et videbitis me—And again a little while and you shall see Me*, He alluded not only to the short period of His passion, after which they should see Him risen again from the dead, but also to the few fleeting years of their life in this world—after which they should see Him and enjoy Him in the bliss of the kingdom of heaven. It was as though He said : Be not downhearted at the labours and persecutions you shall meet with after I am gone, because your time of trial will be short ; but your rest and your crown will Be eternal. What great reason, then, hast not thou also to take heart at the thought that the toil thou art undergoing for Almighty God will be passing and short, whereas the reward will be without end ! See how quickly the years thou hast so far misspent have glided by : and the few that remain to thee will glide by more quickly still. When thy life comes to an end, thou wilt then realise how short and fleeting it has been.

III. Consider that if thou wouldst well understand how very short and momentary is all the toil and suffering thou art called upon to undergo in this life for God's sake, thou must compare it with the immense and eternal reward for which it will be exchanged in the next world, and say with the Apostle : *Momentaneum et leve tribulationis nostræ, æternum gloriæ pondus operatus in nobis—2 Cor. iv. 17—For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of*

glory. The toil that worldlings undergo is grievous and of long duration, and the fruit thereof perishable and uncertain. And yet for a reward of this sort, how earnestly and how long do they not toil—this one at court, that one in the battle field, another at sea ! Will, then, the toil that thou hast to undergo for the space of the few years in which thou bearest the burden of regular observance—will this toil appear excessive in thy eyes when in exchange thou wilt receive an eternity of bliss ? *Illi quidem ut corruptibilem coronam accipiant, nos autem incorruptam*—1 Cor. ix. 25—*They indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one.*

MONDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Estote ergo et vos parati ; quia qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet.—Luc. xii. 40.

Be you then also ready ; for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come.

I. CONSIDER that Christ does not tell us to *get* ready for that last journey—death—but bids to *be* ready : *Estote parati.* The greatest folly thou art capable of, is to lose that precious time which God gives thee for thy timely preparation, and to put off getting thyself ready to the very last. The man that does not live always prepared for death, may reckon on his dying unprepared, because the preparation itself ought to consist in a good and holy life. A death-bed preparation is a medley, and by no means proportioned to so important a business as is that of dying well. Two
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kinds of preparation, then, must thou make—one remote, the other proximate. The remote preparation consists in never undertaking any occupation in which thou wouldst not wish to be found engaged when death overtakes thee : the proximate preparation consists in keeping thy conscience-accounts in good order, and in holding thyself in readiness like a laden ship that is port-bound, and only awaits a favourable wind to set sail at once, without any need of taking in stores or undergoing repairs.

II. Consider that thou art not engaged in either of these preparations, because thou promisest thyself time to do so, and dost not heed the warning of Christ, Who declarest hat He will come *qua hora non putatis*, when thou least expectest Him. He says, *qua hora*, because thou art not sure of one day, and not even of one hour. Do not flatter thyself and expect to disprove the words of Christ, by thinking that He will deal with thee after a different fashion, for He addresses Himself to all indiscriminately ; *Ecce venio sicut fur*—Apoc. xvi. 15—*Behold I come as a thief !* be persuaded, then, that He addresses Himself to thee also, and say from thy heart as Job did : *Nescio quando subsistam, et si post modicum tollat me factor meus*—Job xxxii. 22—*I know not how long I shall continue, and whether after a while my Maker may take me away.*

III. Consider that from the fact of Our Lord giving thee warning of His intention to come unexpectedly, He shows thee that it is not His wish to take thee unawares. If He does take thee unawares, the fault will be all thy own, because thou dost not heed His warning, nor endeavourest to live in such wise as though each day were thy last. Make thy prayer, thy confession and Communion, offer up the Holy Sacrifice, as though it were for the last time. Often recommend the last hour of thy life to thy Lord, and earnestly beseech Him to come to thy aid, with thy holy patrons,

at that dread hour, and to defend thee from all danger. If thou actest in this manner, thou wilt live quite ready for death : and though it may come when thou thinkest not, it cannot come when thou art not ready for it, and thou wilt be blessed : *Beati omnes qui expectant eum*—Isa. xxx. 18—*Blessed are all they that wait for Him.*

TUESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Qui delicate a pueritia nutrit servum, postea sentit eum contumacem.—Prov. xxix. 21.

He that nourisheth his servant delicately from his childhood, afterwards shall find him stubborn.

I. CONSIDER that this servant is thy own body, and the rule thou must follow in governing it, is to treat it like a servant ; that is to say, thou must feed it, but not pamper it. If thou givest it no nourishment, it languishes ; but if thou pamperest it, it grows insolent. Whatever nourishment thou affordest it, must be given to it simply and solely that it may behave itself like thy servant, that it may be enabled to watch and toil and labour on behalf of thy soul. But how often dost thou regale it for no other end than to give it pleasure ! This is not acting the master. Show thyself to be such, by making thy body remember that it is but a servant, and bringing it into subjection when thou requirest its services. If at times it has to suffer hunger, or cold, or heat, it cannot be helped : this is but a consequence of its lowly condition.

II. Consider what harm is caused if thou treatest thy body with over-great indulgence : it will only be-

come obstinate, stubborn, sulky, and disobedient. What confusion it causes a master when he bids his servant do something, and he openly assures him to his face that he will do no such thing! Like shame wilt thou be put to by thy own body. It will not be insolent whilst thou art engaged in caressing it; on the contrary, it will then promise thee great things, that it will be in a condition to labour much better for thee, that it will enable thee to give greater attention to prayer and study by day and by night. But do not believe a word of it; because afterwards—*postea*—when thou wishest to put it in harness, and make it work, it will flatly refuse to do so. Do not, therefore, allow thyself to be persuaded to fondle it, notwithstanding all its promises. Follow in this respect the example of the saints, who in order to bring the body to obey the spirit, have always been the less self-indulgent in proportion to the amount of toil and labour they have undergone for God's sake.

III. Consider that this excessive seeking for bodily comfort is especially hurtful to the young. If in a ripe old age, after thy body has toiled much, thou showest a greater condescension towards it, there is not so much harm to be feared. Thus the master is wont to allow greater liberty to a servant whom he has had for many years in his own house. But between servants in general and thy body there is this difference, that towards one's servants there is no question of self-love or inordinate indulgence, whereas towards thy own body thy self-love has a great leaning. Consequently when thou art doubtful how to act, the rule that virtue dictates is, to be lenient towards others and rigorous towards thyself. Ponder awhile, and see how thou observest this rule of action—a rule thou must strive to maintain both in thy youth and in thy old age. Reflect how unbecoming it is for any one who lives in a re-

ligious community, to dispense himself and withdraw from the common observance, either as regards food, sleep, or in aught else, in order to gratify his body and render it intractable.

WEDNESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Qui credit in me . . . flumina de ventre ejus fluent aqua vivæ. Hoc autem dixit de Spiritu Sancto quem accepturi erant credentes in eum.—Joan. vii. 38.

He that believeth in Me . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Now, this He said of the Spirit, which they should receive who believed in Him.

I. CONSIDER the meaning of these words, uttered by Christ in allusion to His faithful followers, as at that time were His Apostles, and as nowadays are those whose lively faith causes them to keep close to their Master's side by the profession of the evangelical counsels. Of these, then, He said that they should all receive from above streams of living water, which should in their abundance overflow the borders of their own souls, and be spread abroad to the advantage and benefit of those with whom they converse. This heavenly water is the Holy Ghost with His sevenfold gifts, which are styled streams to betoken their abundance and ceaseless flow, by virtue of which they never fail or lessen in the soul of him who possesses them by communicating them to others; for the Holy Ghost is *like a fountain of water, whose waters shall not fail*—Isa. lviii. 11—*Sicut fons aquarum cujus non deficiat aquæ.* Thrice happy indeed art thou if thou possessest this fountain of living water, spring-

ing up into life everlasting—Joan. iv. 14—*salientis in vitam æternam* : for in that case thou shalt become one of Christ's true followers, by being raised to the height of perfection, and becoming a useful channel for the welfare of thy neighbour.

II. Consider that these streams of living water are bestowed on Christ's true followers, not to the end that they should confine them in the enclosure of their own hearts, but that they should distribute them abroad to the advantage of others. *Deriventur fontes tui foras, et in plateis aquas tuas divide*—Prov. v. 6—*Let thy fountains be conveyed abroad, and in the streets divide thy waters.* It is thy duty, therefore, not to be content with being good for thy own sake only, but to endeavour to be useful to others also, by employing those means which thy state of life puts within thy reach—namely, by good example, edifying conversation, and fervent prayer. If thou art bound to do thus much for strangers and for people in the world, much more art thou beholden to do so in behalf of thine own household and of thy own brethren. However, if these waters are distributed so as to benefit others, they must flow—not from the mouth but from the heart, where the source is to be found. There are some who apply themselves to preach in public, and give many a counsel and exhortation in private ; but they reap no fruit from all their trouble—and why ? Because theirs are not running waters but stagnant waters, sent abroad by the impulse of vain-glory, or the hope of gain, or some other earthly motive. Strive to gain possession of a source that springs from the heart, and it will make thee a true follower of Christ, and enable thee to produce great fruit in thy neighbour.

III. Consider that, in order to gain possession of this fountain-head, thou must fit thyself for its reception. The Holy Ghost was never given to any one by

main force ; thou must be willing to receive Him of thy own accord. But how canst thou flatter thyself that thou art willing to receive Him unless thou employest the necessary means to render thyself fit for His coming, in imitation of the Apostles ? The necessary dispositions consist in earnest desire, frequent prayer, and entire detachment from creatures which, by taking possession of thy heart, leave no room for the Holy Ghost to come in His blissful fulness, and to fill and gladden thy whole being as He did with the Apostles. *Replevit totam domum ubi erant sedentes.*—Acts ii. 2—*He filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

THURSDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Hospitabitur et pascet et potabit ingratos, et ad hæc amara audiet.—Eccl. xxix. 31.

He shall entertain, and feed, and give drink to the unthankful, and moreover he shall hear bitter words.

I. CONSIDER that Jesus is thy constant guest when He comes to thee in the most Holy Sacrament ; but how different He is from all thy other guests ! When they come to pay thee a visit, they expect thee to entertain and regale them ; but as for Jesus—not content with coming to thee, who art but a vile worm of earth, He must Himself spread a banquet of His own for thee, and give thee Himself as thy food. Ponder then awhile what a wondrous excess of love is this ; so stupendous that it is a wonder every created intellect does not go beside itself from sheer amazement !

II. Consider that it is not merely said *pascet*—he

shall feed—but also *potabit*—*he shall give to drink* ; to give thee to understand that in the sacrament of the altar He presents thee with a complete repast ; not as though to eat His flesh were not the same thing as to drink His Blood, or *vice versa*, but that by making Himself our food under the species of both bread and wine, thou mayest call to mind what thy Lord suffered for thee in undergoing so violent and bloody a death as that of the cross. Reflect then seriously how in this banquet thou receivest that adorable body which for thy sake underwent a most bitter death, and that thou receivest that blood which on thy behalf flowed in such abundant streams from His veins. Oh ! what solid nourishment will not this reflection afford thy soul ; thou wilt of necessity be all on fire with love for One who has loved thee to such a degree !

III. Consider that, great as the wonder is that Our Lord should give Himself to be the food of His own creatures, a still greater wonder is it that He should give Himself as food and drink to ungrateful men—*Pascet et potabit ingratos*. How few are truly grateful to Our Lord for the priceless benefit He has conferred on us in bequeathing to us the most Holy Sacrament of the altar ! How many there are who have hardly received Him into their breasts, than they drive Him forth again to give a welcome to the devil. Any kind of ingratitude is hard for thee to endure ; but most especially when it comes from one whom thou hast daily entertained at thy own table. Yet this is the ingratitude Jesus continually meets with at the hands of sinful man. After all the unheard-of kindness He has shown in his regard in giving Himself to man to be his food, He is subjected to hear complaints and scoffs that embitter His heart to its very core—*Ad hæc amara audiet*. The complaints that men utter against Our Lord are generally that He cares little for them, that they have no reason to put their trust in Him,

and that they look for little from Him. Oh ! how unbearable are such murmurings to Our Saviour after having made Himself our very food in order to become one with us ! How canst thou doubt for an instant that He who has given Himself to thee will give thee every other good ? How canst thou fear lest he should cease to protect thee with an especial love after He has made thee a mystical member of His own Body by receiving the Blessed Sacrament ?

FRIDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

In charitate perpetua dilexi te ; ideo attraxi te miserans.
—Jer. xxxi. 3.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee.

I. CONSIDER what a difference there is between our love and that of Almighty God. We are moved to love others only by reason of the good qualities we discover in them. Almighty God, on the contrary, is moved to love man—not because he is good, but because He wishes to make him good. A sculptor sees the trunk of a tree in its native forest ; he is pleased with it—not for what it is in itself, but on account of what he intends by the aid of his chisels to carve out of it. So also is it with Almighty God and His creatures, only far more really, because it is He who imparts the capability also of being operated on, which is not the case with the sculptor. When thou lovest any one, thou art induced to love him by reason of his good qualities ; but the love thy Lord bears thee has no other motive or origin than His love

itself. Wilt thou not then learn to love with all thy heart One who loves thee so tenderly, and has in Himself so many claims to thy love?

II. Consider that the love Almighty God bears toward thee has been everlasting, inasmuch as thou hast ever been the object of that eternal act by which He loves His creatures in Himself. Thou art beloved by Him, moreover, not merely as it were in a general way, together with all mankind, but in particular and in thy own individual person. How, then, is it possible that thou shouldst not be stirred up to love Him in return—thou who art so easily drawn to love those that are kind to thee or further thy interests, even though perhaps previously unknown to thee. How devoted ought thy love to be for thy God, Who loved thee even before thou camest into the world—aye, and before the world itself existed! Can it be that thou hesitatest to make up thy mind to love One Who has loved thee from all eternity? If thou forsakest so old a friend for other new ones, thou wilt find out thy folly to thy own cost: *Ne derelinquas amicum antiquum; novus enim non erit similis illi.*—Eccl. ix. 14. *Forsake not an old friend, for the new will not be like him.*

III. Consider that not only has Almighty God, out of His own pure love, fixed His choice on thee *ab æterno*—*from all eternity*—but he has likewise *ab æterno*—*from all eternity* arranged a series of fitting means to draw thee to Himself. Reflect awhile on the conveniences and opportunities He has given thee for doing good both in the world and in the cloister, by reason of which He can in all truth say of thee, *attraxi te—I have drawn thee*—even employing a loving violence to overcome the resistance of thy rebellious will. Though He might have abandoned thee on account of thy recusancy, He has continued to strengthen thee and show mercy in thy behalf—*miserans*—taking com-

passion on thy ignorance and frailty, thy malice and obstinacy. After so many acts of mercy in thy regard, wilt thou not admit thyself to be forced to yield and give thyself up as conquered once for all ?

SATURDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Ecce breves anni transeunt, et semitam per quam non revertar, ambulo.—Job xvi. 23.

Behold short years pass away, and I am walking in a path by which I shall not return.

I. CONSIDER how quickly the years pass by. Look back on those thou hast already spent in religion and in the world. Ah, how short do they not seem ! And equally short will the few years be that remain to thee. How comes it, then, that thou art so careless in amassing merit for heaven ? *Breves dies transeunt.* The fleeting days glide by, and, nevertheless, thou givest so many of them to sleep, to idleness, to folly, and to useless amusements. What madness is this ! Get thee from thy bed at early morn to make thy prayer and chant thy office, to study and employ thyself for the good of thy neighbour, because the happiness thou wilt reap in eternity will be in proportion to the good thou shalt have sown during the short remainder of thy life.

II. Consider that time is not only short, but it cannot be recalled, and, whatever time thou lovest now is lost for ever, and can never be regained. It is like the water which glides along the river-banks—it will never pass there again. Yet thou makest so little account of thy time ! At the hour of death how it

will grieve thee to have misspent it so fruitlessly ! Oh, how thou wouldst then fain have in thy power—I will not say the years thou nowslightest, but those hours those odd times and spare moments to the value of which thou art now so blind ! Thou wastest time as thou pourest away water, though in the intentions of thy Lord thou oughtest to treasure it up as thou wouldst hoard gold. *Particula boni doni non te prætereat*—Eccl. xiv. 14—*Let not the part of a good gift overpass thee.* Art thou not aware that every moment of time, if well put out to interest, is capable of realising for thee greater riches than the first kingdom in the world could bring thee ?

III. Consider what would not a damned soul do if, by a special favour of Almighty God, it were raised to life again, and so, were enabled to live its life in this world over again. Thinkest thou it would again be so careless in availing itself of the time God granted it ? Oh, how it would exert itself not to allow a single moment to be lost, but to spend every instant to the greatest possible advantage ! Yet thou, who perchance hast more than once deserved by thy sins to be at this very moment buried in hell—thou takest so little trouble to spend well that time which Almighty God, in His infinite mercy, gives thee in holy Religion, to atone for thy past sins, and make thy salvation sure. How, pray, would it fare with thee, if thou shouldst learn the value of time just when thou canst no longer have it at thy disposal ? Repeat frequently to thyself those words of Job : *Semitam per quam non revertar, ambulo*—*I am walking in a path by which I shall not return.* The life of man is a road to be but once travelled over. Happy is he that is wise enough to turn his journey to good account and enrich himself as he goes ; but woe to him that lets the chance go by ; he will never be able to retrace his steps and amend his mistake !

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Nemo ex vobis interrogat me : Quo vadis ? Sed quia hæc locatus sum vobis, tristitia implevit cor vestrum.—
Joan. xvi. 5.

None of you asketh Me : Whither goest thou ? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

I. CONSIDER that when the Apostles heard from their Divine Master that He was on the point of quitting this earth, they were at once overpowered by sadness and weighed down by grief, because they did not reflect whither He was going, nor inquire the why and the wherefore. If they had but understood what a great advantage His leaving them would be, they would for a certainty have rejoiced and been consoled at their loss. This is just what happens many a time to thee. On seeing thyself assaulted by some trial, or on receiving an intimation that thou hast to leave this charge, or quit that honourable post, thou forthwith growest sad and lovest thy peace of mind, grieving to find thyself deprived of the conveniences, or of the society which perchance thy former employ brought with it ; and thou dost not reflect on the great advantage that accrues to thee from the change. But, if thou wouldst only learn to resign thyself to the dispositions of Divine Providence, which are ordained by Almighty God simply for thy own greater good, instead of being grieved, thou wouldst remain full of joy and consolation.

II. Consider what Christ said in order to console His Apostles : *Expedi vobis ut ego vadam—It is expedient to you that I go ;* because, unless I leave you and return to my Father, the Holy Ghost, with the fulness of His

gifts, will not be given to you. I must, first of all, take possession of my Kingdom, and then open the treasures of Heaven on your behalf: *Si enim non abiero, Paraclitus non veniet ad vos. Si autem abiero, mittam eum ad vos.* Now, if it was so advantageous to the Apostles that they should be deprived of the consolation they derived from the visible presence of Jesus, because this was for them the means of obtaining the invisible presence of the Sanctifying Spirit, of how much greater advantage is it for thee to be at times deprived of sensible consolation in prayer, or that thou shouldst lose the paltry and shallow consolation thou seekest from creatures, as a means for obtaining a more plentiful share of the consolation of the Holy Ghost, who will at the same time enrich thee with His gifts? *Expedit tibi.*

III. Consider what was the reason of Christ's declaring to His Apostles that the Holy Ghost would not come down upon them unless He departed. In the supper-room each one of them was endowed with the power of the Holy Ghost, but not in all its fulness. *Accipite Spiritum Sanctum; quorum remiseritis peccata remittuntur eis*—Joan. xx. 22—*Receive ye the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them.* Why, then, was He not given to them in all His fulness, so long as Jesus was on earth? The reason is because since the object of the Apostles' being endowed with the fulness of the Holy Ghost was to make them go and preach the name of Jesus and His glory to all nations, the visible presence of Our Lord would have proved a hindrance, on account of the difficulty they would have experienced in leaving their Master, and separating in order to fulfil their mission amongst the Medes and Parthians and other distant peoples. Therefore, to ensure their readiness to preach the gospel throughout the whole world, it was needful that they should be weaned from the

human attachment, otherwise praiseworthy, that, bound them to Jesus. Now, if this attachment and sensible affection to our Lord's humanity was a hindrance in the case of the Apostles to the coming of the Holy Ghost, what a much greater hindrance in thy own case is to be found in those dangerous affections and ill-regulated attachments which thy heart bears to creatures? Detachment from creatures is a necessary condition for the full enjoyment of the Creator.

MONDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Si vos cum sitis mali, nostis bona data dare filiis vestris quanto magis Pater vester de cælo dabit spiritum bonum petentibus se?—Luc. xi. 13.

If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him.

I. CONSIDER how wrongfully thou complainest that Almighty God does not listen to thy prayers: forasmuch as He is ever more ready to give than thou art to receive. In order to acquit Himself from this unjust charge, He would have thee take heed that if it is impossible for a fond father to deny his son what he reasonably asks for, how much less will thy Heavenly Father refuse thy petition. This reasoning ought to be sufficient to dispel all diffidence and doubt as to thy prayers being favourably heard, if only thou mark the difference there is between an earthly father and thy Heavenly Father.

II. Consider moreover that a son is much less truly

such with regard to his earthly father than he is with regard to his Heavenly Father : because the former is father of only a portion of himself—namely, of his body—and consequently his love for his son is not entire and perfect. But thy Heavenly Father is the father of thy whole being, because He is the sole cause that produces the soul and the primary cause in the formation of the body. Moreover, thy earthly father is such only in the natural order of things, whereas Almighty God is thy Father both in the natural and supernatural order ; for He has raised thee in the order of grace to the lofty and wonderful privilege of being His child. If therefore thy Heavenly Father loves thee far more really than thy earthly father, he will surely be also far more ready to grant thy petitions. Bear in mind also that as thy Heavenly Father is infinitely rich, He in no wise impoverishes Himself by what He bestows on thee, and that as He is infinitely happy Himself, nothing gives Him greater pleasure than to make thee happy also. On the contrary, if it be a question of a human father, whatever he bestows on his son, he has earned it by the sweat of his brow, and in giving it to his son he takes it away from himself. If then an earthly father, who is of so mean condition and so much less loving, gives nevertheless to his children what they ask for if good for them, is it not far more likely that thy Heavenly Father will do the same in thy regard ?

III. Consider that after weighing these arguments, thou must needs admit thyself to be in the wrong when thou complainest that thy Heavenly Father does not grant thy petitions. If it be so, the fault is all thy own, and so instead of breaking out into complaints, lay the blame at thy own door, because thou askest not what is for thy real good, viz., *spiritum bonum—a good spirit*. This it is that Almighty God desires above everything to bestow on thee : a spirit

of charity, a spirit of humility, a spirit of obedience, and so on, and it is this genial spirit which, like a gentle breeze, will waft thee to the haven of Paradise : *Spiritus tuus bonus deducet me in terram rectam*—Ps. cxlii. 10—*Thy good spirit shall lead me into the right land.* If thou askest Him for this in the proper manner, doubt not but that He will give it thee ; but if thou askest for ought else, that is, for temporal benefits, He will grant them only in so far as they will help to put thee in possession of Paradise. In the words *Dabit spiritum bonum*—*He will give a good spirit*—it is not said *dat*—*He gives at once*—but *dabit*—*He will give*—and therefore if thou dost not obtain thy suit at once, think not that it is overlooked. He knows right well when is the proper moment to grant thy request, and wishes that thou shouldst keep on perseveringly with thy prayers—as a fond father does with his little son, to whom he defers giving what he asks for, because it is a pleasure to see him at his side so fondly and earnestly begging the accomplishment of his desire.

TUESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Usque ad tempus sustinebit patiens, et postea redditio jucunditatis.—Eccl. i. 29.

A patient man shall bear for a time, and afterwards joy shall be restored to him.

I. CONSIDER that however much thou hast to put up with thou must not be disheartened. True it is that thou hast something to suffer—but thou sufferest for a time only in that office, in that place, in that employ-

ment which obedience assigns to thee : *Usque ad tempus*. Temptations will come to an end, hardships will end, misfortunes will end, humiliations will end, even before the close of thy lifetime—short as it is—and then will come *redditio jucunditatis* ; joy shall be restored to thee—the joy of a bliss which in its extent is boundless and in its duration infinite. Hast thou not then a sufficient motive to encourage thyself to bear up patiently with thy shortlived trials, in the certain knowledge that by so doing thou art earning for thyself a happiness that will never end.

II. Consider that thou must not set thy heart on enjoying thyself now, because it is not the proper season : be content to allow happiness to come in its own good time. Look at the state of a tree in the winter season. Pruned and bare, covered with snow, in disgrace as it were—no one so much as looks at it. But wait a while, and we shall see ! What luxuriant foliage, what a mass of flowers, what inviting fruit ! The same sort of thing will happen to thee, wait awhile : *Usque ad tempus*. Now is thy winter. How foolish would that tree be which, if endued with reason, should persist in putting forth its buds too soon through impatience to enjoy itself, seeing that in a very short time it would wither up ; and when spring came, and the other trees were to be seen clad with verdure and beauty, it would be its lonely lot to remain deprived of all its charms. The same mishap will overtake thee if thou wouldst now wish to anticipate a state of things which belongs only to the blessed in heaven. Thou art not here to enjoy thyself now, but to suffer and to fit thyself for future enjoyment. *In mundo pressuram habebitis*—Joan. xvi. 23—*In the world you shall have distress*.—Dost thou understand this truth ?

III. Consider that the joy to come will be in proportion to thy suffering now ; hence it is styled

reditio—a giving back—because Our Lord will pay thee back again as much pleasure as thou shalt have sacrificed for Him here by depriving thyself of it for love of Him: *Secundum multitudinem dolorum meorum, consolationes tuæ lætificaverunt animam meam*—Ps. xciii. 19—*According to the multitude of my sorrows Thy comforts have given joy to my soul.* Dost thou perchance distrust him? Fear not, He is a most trustworthy debtor! aye, and how much more will He not pay thee back over and above what thou hast given to Him? Let it suffice thee to know that in return for a momentary pleasure, for an empty, shadow-like satisfaction, He will bestow on thee the full enjoyment of all His goods and of Himself: *Ego ero merces tua magna nimis*—Genes. xv. 1—*I will be thy reward exceeding great.*

WEDNESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Ipsē spiritus reddit testimonium spiritui nostro, quod sumus filii Dei; si autem filii, et hæredes: hæredes quidem Dei, cohæredes autem Christi; si tamen compatimur ut et conglorificemur.—Rom. viii. 16, 17.

For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God, and if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ: yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.

I. CONSIDER that the testimony which the Holy Ghost vouchsafes to us of our being children of God is not an outward testimony like that given to Christ in the Jordan, by way of vision to the eyes or of voices in

the ear ; but it is a testimony rendered to the spirit, consisting in that interior, deep-seated feeling of filial love which He instils into our hearts, and by virtue of which we detest sin simply because it is an offence against God, and in our actions aim only at pleasing God and promoting His glory. The surest mark we can have of being sons of God is to toil for love-sake : thrice happy art thou if thou possessest this filial love in thy heart.

II. Consider that the being a son of God entails also as a consequence the being heir of God and joint heir with Christ. The inheritance in question is no other than God Himself : forasmuch as Almighty God has no riches apart from Himself, and He gives all His children the full enjoyment of the riches He contains in Himself, without lessening in the slightest degree the entirety of the inheritance for each one in particular. All partake in the same inheritance with Christ—Christ as the Son of God by nature, we as children by adoption. We should never of ourselves have come to enjoy this adoption of Christ had He not obtained it for us by His prayers, His sweat, and His blood. Now, is it not a marvel most wonderful and unheard of, that Christ should have delivered Himself up to death in order that thou shouldst reign jointly with Him, seeing that amongst us men it was never known that any one enjoying the rights of natural sonship sought to persuade his father to adopt some stranger as his son, to partake of his inheritance ; but rather we read of instances in which a son has even slain his own brother to ensure his sole tenure of the inheritance. What a wonderful love then must that be which Jesus bears thee !

III. Consider that thou canst not become a joint-heir with Christ without some toil and labour on thy part. Eternal beatitude is an inheritance—not like those of this world, which often fall to the lot of those

who neither deserve them nor have sought them, but it is an inheritance which is given to him only who earns it and deserves it. What a deal had Christ to endure to attain it, though he was the Son of God by nature ! And thou, who art a son by adoption only, wouldst thou wish to have it for nothing ? If thou wouldst reign with Christ, thou must needs suffer with Christ. *Si tamen compatimur.* And when perchance thou hast to partake in some slight degree of Christ's sufferings, though it be a mere nothing in comparison with what He suffered, thou must suffer also with Christ and like Christ,

THURSDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Quomodo vos potestis credere, qui gloriam ab invicem accipitis, et gloriam quæ a Deo solo est non quæritis ?—Joan. v. 44.

How can you believe who receive glory from one another ; and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek ?

I. CONSIDER how hurtful a thing it is to be desirous of human glory. It was on this very account that so many of the leading men amongst the Jews failed to profess the faith of Christ. And how so ? *Dilexerunt enim gloriam hominum magis quam gloriam Dei.*—Joan. xii. 43—Because *they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.* This is indeed the cause why nowadays also so many Catholics, and even Religious, if they do not actually lose the faith, do most certainly lose a lively faith, which consists in acting up to what their faith teaches them. It is certain that if a Christian conducts himself as he ought—and

much more so if a Religious does so—it will be many a time necessary, by the very fact of forgiving injuries, of yielding to other people's judgment, of humbling one's self—it will be necessary, I say, to overcome many a human respect, and expose one's self to many a cutting remark ; and how is it possible for any one to do this who devotes himself to, or at least makes great account of, the glory of men ?

II. Consider how great is the folly of such as love the glory that comes from men, inasmuch as it in great measure banishes that which comes from God. The glory that is derived from God is solid, and based on merit ; that which proceeds from man is trumpery and good for nothing. because, in the first place, men either cannot or will not form a true opinion of thee. Then, again, it is so uncertain of attainment, that not unfrequently thou art blamed for the very thing thou imaginedst to be an occasion of praise ; and lastly, because it is so fickle and unstable when thou hast actually attained to it. Wouldst thou, then, rather run after this empty bubble of human glory than strive after that real sterling glory which is derived from God ? If thou didst understand what being praiseworthy in the eyes of God really signified, thou wouldst hold the esteem of men to be worth very little indeed. Thou canst not be commended by God without at the same time being honoured and esteemed by all the choirs of angels and saints. True it is that human praise and esteem come across thy notice because they are superficial ; but the approval of God, though hidden from thee, is more real, more lasting, and has the certainty of faith. Accustom thyself, therefore, not to value any other kind of glory than that which is discoverable by the eye of faith, and say, as David did, *Ut placeam coram Deo in lumine viventium*—Ps. lv. 13—*That I may please in the sight of God, in the light of the living.* Mark the words

in lumine viventium ; because if faith with its supernatural motives is *lumen viventium*, the desire of human esteem may be fitly styled *lumen mortuorum*.

III. Consider that not only must thou not seek, but thou must not even heed, the esteem and praise of men, even though their good opinion should not be at variance with, but should be consequent upon, a true estimate of any work thou mayest have undertaken for the glory of God. Thou must aim at pleasing God alone, because it is thus thou wilt really be seeking *gloriam quæ a solo Deo est*—the glory which is from God alone. Hence, whosoever wishes to give great satisfaction to Almighty God must necessarily strip himself of all self-seeking, and aim entirely at pleasing Him without having an eye to his own interests : he must seek him merely in order to fulfil His good pleasure. This is loving God as He loves us. He loves us without any motives of self-interest, and simply for our own benefit. If in our actions we seek no other end than to please God alone, and strive purely after his glory, we also shall succeed in loving Him without any reference to our own interests.

FRIDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Omne gaudium existimate fratres mei cum in tentationes varias incidieritis ; scientes quod probatio fidei vestræ patientiam operatur ; patientia autem perfectum opus habet.—*Jac. i. 2—4.*

My brethren, count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations ; knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience ; and patience hath a perfect work.

I. CONSIDER that joy has for its object a good that is

present. Hence, when S. James says that we have to look upon adversity as *omne gaudium*—all joy, it is a sign that in adversity is comprised every good, since in this world our real good consists in suffering a great deal for God. Yet where is the man to be found, even amongst the most spiritual, who would think of making a votive offering in thanksgiving for the loss of his sight or of his hearing ; or because he has received a thorough mortification, or has had to undergo some severe loss ? How does this come about ? The only reason that can be assigned is because our mode of action is not in accordance with our rule of faith, but according to our own estimate and inclination, both of which are under the sway of the senses. Endeavour to direct thy conduct by the light of faith, and let the silly world say what it likes.

II. Consider how it comes to pass that adversity brings along with it all other good. It is because it causes us to gain that greatest of all goods—patience—*patientiam operatur*, and it is patience after all that hath a perfect work—*perfectum opus habet*—by giving perseverance, which perfects and crowns every good work : it is patience that enables us to overcome the hindrances that prevent our persevering in the good we begin, such hindrances as interior sadness, and the restiveness of our passions, because patience is itself a kind of perseverance that gains greater energy and vigour in proportion as the difficulty of the good work it accompanies increases. By thus enabling thee to persevere in the good works thou performest one after another, whether acts of obedience or of humility, or thy spiritual exercises, thou disposest thyself for final perseverance, whereas without patience thou wilt never be able to accomplish a single undertaking of any worth.

III. Consider that this great treasure of patience cannot be acquired by one who merely puts up with some

chance trial just for once in a way, but by him who bears up against trial after trial by a continuous exercise of patience. Study and theorise to thy heart's content in discovering reasons why thou shouldst be enamoured of patience, but thou wilt never acquire it without practising it. No soldier ever became a hero by poring over his books, but only with his sword in hand : *Probatio fidei vestræ patientiam operatur*—*The trying of your faith worketh patience*. Strive, then, to exercise thyself in the practice of patience at all times, and, in order to ensure thy practice of it under more difficult circumstances, put it also into requisition on those occasions which present less difficulty, but are more frequent ; such, for instance, as arise from heat and cold, absence of comfort, or the annoyances thou art subjected to by those who surround thee, and a thousand other like occasions, which will never be wanting. Above all, ask earnestly for the gift of patience from Almighty God, the only source of all our good.

SATURDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Dives cum dormierit, nihil secum auferet ; aperiet oculos suos et nihil inueniet.—Job xxvii. 19.

The rich man, when he shall sleep, shall take away nothing with him ; he shall open his eyes and find nothing.

I. CONSIDER that in Holy Writ Death is called a vigil, and also a sleep ; a vigil indeed for the wicked, and a sleep for the virtuous. It is a vigil for the wicked, because death puts an end to that lethargic sleep by which they are so miserably overpowered whilst en-

gaged in the pursuit of imaginary happiness, as in a dream, and they enter upon a vigil of sufferings never to be relieved by any interval of rest. For the virtuous, death is a slumber, because then all the penances and mortifications they practised in life are over and done with, and they begin to enjoy rest, and the fruit of the toils of their previous watching. *Amodo dicit Spiritus, ut requiescant a laboribus suis*—Apoc. xiv. 13—*From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.* Oh, how much better it is for thee to watch patiently now during these few days of life, and be able to enjoy repose at death, than to be forced to watch by dint of torture for endless ages! Think seriously on this!

II. Consider that of such as sleep and take their repose in this world, it is said that at the hour of death—*nihil secum auferet*: they shall take away nothing with them, because, as they have put all their attention in life to acquiring riches, to enjoying amusements, and to lording it over others, nothing of all this will be of any avail to them, or will accompany them in death. On the contrary, he that now watches, by giving all his attention to perform virtuous works, and to employ himself in the service of Almighty God, takes everything away with him into the next world for all eternity: *opera eorum sequuntur illos*—*their works follow them.* Look well, therefore, to what thou now undertakest, to thy studies, thy labours, thy employments. If thou performest them for God and with reference to God, they will escort thee and put thee in possession of an eternal recompense; whereas, if thou actest for human ends or earthly gains—*nihil secum auferet*—thou shalt take away nothing with thee.

III. Consider what will come to pass at the death of one whose whole attention has been given to the things of this world. He will be in precisely the same position as a man that, on awaking from sleep, looks

about for the riches and pomp he dreamt he was possessed of and finds them not, because they have vanished with his dream. Oh, what distress of mind, what agony will such a one endure on entering the threshold of eternity! He will curse that dream which made him mistake a counterfeit for the reality, and in consequence of which he discovers himself to be poor and utterly destitute of all lasting and eternal riches. He will curse his own folly and madness. Oh, how earnestly will he then wish that he had been wise enough to look after his eternal interests; but there will be no time to do so, because the unfortunate wretch will have opened his eyes too late to the truth. Take, then, a lesson from this, and keep thy eyes open. Go not in pursuit of advantages which are but dreams, but turn thy attention in good earnest to the gaining of real goods which, when death comes, will put thee in possession of a kingdom, and a kingdom, too, that will endure for ever.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis.—
Joan. xvi. 23.

If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you.

I. CONSIDER, with a view to strengthening thy love for prayer, what are the grounds on which we ought to trust its wonderful power of obtaining every real good from heaven. Its efficacy is not grounded on the merits of the suppliant, but on the promise so often repeated in Holy Writ that we shall be heard: *Invoca*

me . . . eruam te—Ps. xlix. 15—*Call upon Me . . . I will deliver thee.* If Almighty God did not mean to hear us He surely would not promise to do so, nor would He urge us in so many ways to present our petitions to Him. If at times He showers down such an abundance of blessings even on those who did not pray for them, what will He not do for those who entreat Him on the strength of His own divine promise? When therefore thou goest to beg Almighty God in prayer for some especial favour, thou must not look to thy own demerits—which, forsooth, make thee quite unworthy of being heard—but thou must put all thy trust in the goodness of that Lord Who has pledged His word to come to thy aid, and say with the Psalmist: *Domine non confundar, quoniam invocari te*—Ps. xxx. 18—*Let me not be confounded, O Lord, for I have called upon Thee.*

II. Consider that the efficacy of prayer depends not only on the promise of Almighty God, but still more on the merits of Jesus, which He has made over to us as to His younger brothers: *Si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis*—*If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you.* Thou art distrustful of obtaining thy request because thou failest to discover any deserts of thy own. Well, then, how much greater thy confidence ought to be, considering that all Jesus' merits belong to thee, and are looked upon by the Eternal Father as though they were all thy own, in virtue of the intimate union that obtains in a body between the members and the head. If then thou hast that store of infinite merits which Jesus has treasured up for thee, to back up thy petition, how canst thou be afraid of failing for want of deservedness? Jesus' merits give us so great a right to be heard, that we may even put forward our suit to the Eternal Father under title of justice rather than of

mercy : *In justitia tua libera me*—Ps. xxx. 1—*Deliver me in Thy justice.*

III. Consider what are the conditions which are required on thy side in order to be heard. The first is that thou be by grace a living member of the body of Christ, because the life-blood of the head exerts no influence on such members as are either dead or cut off by sin. The second condition depends on the sort of petition thou puttest forth—that is, whether thou askest for real and spiritual favours, or for blessings that are merely temporal : *Petite et accipietis, ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum*—Joan. xvi. 24—*Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full* : that is to say, thou shalt receive such blessings as are capable of making thee fully happy, or which may at least serve as a means for making thee happy. The merits which Jesus has gained for us are meant to enable us to obtain the goods of heaven, not those of earth ; hence temporal blessings are not absolutely promised to us as are heavenly blessings, but are given only by way of adjunct when, namely, they are an aid and not a hindrance to the attainment of our last end. The third condition is that thou pray with faith, raising up thy heart and mind to the throne of omnipotence : *Omnia possibilia sunt credenti*—Marc. ix. 22—*All things are possible to him that believeth.* Thou must pray not only with faith, but with perseverance, and not give over on perceiving that thou art not heard at once ; for God often puts off granting our requests because He is pleased at the homage we offer Him by our prayers, and with a view to make our desire more earnest and our hearts more yearning by our continued entreaties : *Orationi instate*—Col. iv. 2—*Be instant in prayer*, says S. Paul.

MONDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Data est mihi omnis potestas in cælo et in terra ; euntes ergo docete omnes gentes.—Matth. xxviii. 18, 19.

All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth : going therefore, teach ye all nations.

I. CONSIDER that on the occasion of Christ's appearing to all the disciples on the mountain of Galilee, according to His promise, He said to them: *Data est mihi omnis potestas in cælo et in terra*—*All power is given to me in heaven and on earth*—giving them to understand that it was by the merits of His passion and His death on the Cross that He had won for Himself all the glory and fulness of power which belonged to Him by right of heirship as the only begotten Son of God. Now if Jesus had to win for Himself what was already His own, and win it at the cost of so much suffering: *Opportuit pati Christum, et ita intrare in gloriam suam*—Luc. xxiv. 26—*It was needful that Christ should suffer, and so enter into His glory*—wouldst thou, who art but a guilty child of Adam, a son of wrath, deserving only of banishment from Paradise and of punishment in the lowest abyss for thy own crimes—wouldst thou dare to hope to enjoy the bliss of heaven without fighting for it, but simply as thine own inheritance, and without any toil or any suffering? This is not possible.

II. Consider that Christ has by His painful death merited and won the riches of heaven, not for Himself, but for us : and He therefore adds : *Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes*—*Go therefore and teach all nations.* He intimates that it was His intention to lay open to all mankind, through the merits of His death, the lost road to heaven, and to assign as the means for winning

this heavenly kingdom, the embracing of His teaching and the observance of His divine commandments, coupled with the obligation of being cleansed by the sacrament of Baptism and aggregated to the body of the faithful. Salvation was henceforth not to be confined, as hitherto, to the Jewish people alone, but to be laid open to all nations and peoples in common. How thankful thou shouldst be to thy Saviour for having brought thee into existence at a time so favourable for salvation, and for having bestowed on thee the happy lot of being washed in the sanctifying waters of baptism, and of even being numbered amongst His most intimate followers ! But if the mere fact of bearing the name of Christian by virtue of baptism is of little avail to him that does not observe what he promises to fulfil in the reception of this sacrament—*docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis*—teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you—what will it avail thee to have been a religious and a follower of Christ if thou dost not live up to the obligations of thy state ?

III. Consider that in the first ages of the Church it was necessary to strengthen the faith of the first believers by miracles, as Our Lord Himself declared : *Signa autem eos qui crediderint hæc sequentur*, etc.—Marc. xvi. 17—*And these signs shall follow them that believe*, etc. But nowadays the faith of the Church has no longer any need of being proved by fresh miracles ; it requires rather to be cultivated and strengthened by the exercise of virtue, and as regards thy own self, by driving from thy heart thy faults and failings, by adopting a language becoming the new and spiritual man, and not distinctive of the old and carnal man, by stifling the poisonous suggestions and temptations of the evil one, by furthering to the best of thy power the welfare of thy neighbour, and applying such remedies to his spiritual maladies as thy state allows

thee. If the mere fact of professing the faith and bearing the name of a Christian is not enough for salvation without works befitting a Christian, neither will the mere profession of the religious state be sufficient to save thee unless thou perform the works of a religious. Enter into thyself and reflect if thy course of action be that of a true Christian and of a true religious, or if it be rather that of a worldling and of a lover of vanity.

TUESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK AFTER EASTER.

Ecce ego vobiscum sum . . . usque ad consummationem sæculi.—Matt. xxviii. 20.

Behold I am with you . . . even to the consummation of the world.

I. CONSIDER how, when our Divine Redeemer was just about to quit His disciples and ascend into heaven, He promised them, in order to console them, that He would never forsake them, but that He would remain with them until the end of the world—not indeed by His bodily and visible presence, but in a spiritual and invisible manner, to aid and comfort them. What more consoling encouragement could they have had in losing their Divine Master than the assurance of His being always ready to help them, and to be with them in all their difficulties? Thou also art a partaker in the benefit of this promise, extending as it does to all times and to the whole Church of the faithful—*usque ad consummationem sæculi*—*even to the consummation of the world.* That Lord is by thy side, Who is the sovereign master of heaven and earth, to console thee and aid thee in all thy needs. Is it not indeed

wonderful that though He in no way stands in need of thee, yet, in His goodness, He should be willing to be ever ready to assist thee, and that thou who art so needy and destitute of everything good, shouldst live so far from Him in thy thoughts and affections, and that thou shouldst be so slow to have recourse to Him in thy trials and difficulties ?

II. Consider how it was this promise that gave the Apostles courage and strength to destroy idolatry, and plant Christ's faith throughout the world, overcoming such a host of difficulties, and sacrificing their very lives amidst frightful tortures. They all and each felt that they were not alone in the strife, and that in the strength of Jesus' arm they were sure of the victory : *Ne timeas, quia ego tecum sum*—Jerem. i. 8—*Be not afraid I am with thee.* This same certainty of having Jesus to help thee ought to give thee courage to undertake cheerfully the offices and charges assigned thee by obedience, even though it should seem to thee at times that thou hast not the bodily strength nor the talent that are requisite : if thou puttest thy trust in thy Lord, He will give thee help proportionate to the burdens He lays on thee.

III. Consider in what manner Christ's promise of remaining with the faithful of His Church comes to be verified. In the first place, then, He is with them, inasmuch as He is God by virtue of His Immensity, in the same way as He is everywhere : *In ipso enim vivimus, movemur et sumus*—Acts xvii. 28—for *in Him we live, and move, and are.* Secondly, inasmuch as He is God-man, He abides with His faithful by habitual grace, which unites our souls to Him, and by actual grace, which gives us strength to perform good works. Thirdly, He is with His faithful by the especial care He takes in governing them, and directing them in the attainment of their last end, and more particularly still in the care He bestows on the Church at large by

maintaining it firm and proof against all the assaults of hell : *et portæ inferi non prævalebunt adversus eam*—Matt. xvi. 18—the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Lastly, He dwells with His faithful by His sacramental presence. If, then, Jesus is with thee in so many different ways, do thou on thy part endeavour to keep thyself in His presence by having Him in thy heart and mind, as far as thou art able, in all thy actions and all thy life long.

ASCENSION EVE.

Eduxit eos foras in Bethaniam ; et, elevatis manibus suis, benedixit eis.—Luc. xxiv. 50.

And He led them out as far as Bethania ; and, lifting up His hands, He blessed them.

I. CONSIDER that, although Jesus had given His Apostles many instructions for the good government of the Church on the many occasions He had appeared to them during the previous forty days, nevertheless He wished to show a more tender proof of His affection just before leaving them by sitting at table and eating with them, although His glorified body stood not in need of food. By acting thus He made them feel that He was going to heaven to prepare a place for each one of them in His kingdom : *Vado parare vobis locum.*—Joan. xiv. 3—I go to prepare a place for you ; and He gave them an assurance that before long they should be seated with Him on His throne : *Accipiam vos ad meipsum, ut ubi ego sum, et vos sitis*—Joan. xiv. 3—I will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be. Thus they had an assurance that they had no cause to be sorrowful, but ought rather

to be glad that He was about to return to His heavenly Father. By these marks of tender love He gained the affections and won the hearts of His disciples. Take a lesson from this how thou must deal with thy neighbour in order to gain him over to God : mildness is always a more powerful agent than harshness.

II. Consider that, before ascending into heaven, Jesus led His Apostles to Mount Olivet. It was there He began His passion by the sweat of blood and mortal agony, and it was thence He would ascend triumphant into heaven—to teach us that the only path to heaven is the path of suffering, and that glory and triumph must be heralded by labour and sadness. What feelings of emotion it must have awakened in the breasts of Peter, James, and John—those three favoured witnesses of His agony in the garden—at beholding such a sequel to such a scene ! How much they felt encouraged to embrace their own crosses and trials ! Reflect, then, frequently and seriously on the great advantages thou mayest look for in suffering for God's sake during thy lifetime ; thou wilt in this way love the cross of thy religious state far above all the pleasures and magnificence of worldlings.

III. Consider how when Our Lord had reached the summit of Mount Olivet, He presented Himself to their gaze beaming with a more than ordinary aspect of majesty and loving tenderness, and raised His hands and blessed them—*Elevatis manibus benedixit eis*—allowing them even to kiss the sacred wounds in His hands and feet. Picture to thyself what must have been the emotion of the disciples on this occasion, but especially what must have been the feelings of the Virgin Mother towards Her Son, and of the Son towards His Mother. How fortunate thou wouldst account thyself hadst thou been present at this parting, and to have received Jesus' blessing ! Draw nigh in spirit and approach the lips of thy heart to

kiss His sacred wounds, and thou wilt receive thy blessing also, for the wounds of Jesus are real sources of every good, and a fountain of blessings: *Fons patens domui Jacob*—Zach. xiii. 1—*A fountain open to the house of Jacob.*

ASCENSION DAY. |

Videntibus illis elevatus est: et nubes suscepit eum ab oculis eorum.—Act. i. 9.

While they looked on, He was raised up: and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

I. CONSIDER that in the act of being raised from earth to heaven, Christ discovered Himself to His wondering disciples with far more resplendence and glory than He did on Mount Thabor, and as He went gradually rising from earth He enabled them to behold more and more distinctly the marvellous beauty of His glorified body, with all the splendour and characteristics of its glorified state. What a wonderful sight was this, and how full of joy for the Apostles, to gaze on their Divine Master mounting the skies in the midst of such glory, after having beheld Him in the supper-room humbling Himself to such a degree as to wash their very feet, and on so many occasions ill-treated and oppressed during the whole career of His passion. With what earnest longings and tender love must they have followed Him up in this His triumphant ascension! Seek to follow after Him thyself, by raising thy heart above the pettiness of this miserable world—this valley of tears. But if thou wouldst soar higher still, thou must needs

follow the example of Jesus by humbling thyself. His ascension into heaven was so glorious because, first of all, He had humbled and lowered Himself on earth : *Quod enim ascendit, quid est, nisi quia descendit primum*—Ephes. iv. 9.

II. Consider how whilst the disciples were standing with their eyes and their whole mind riveted on this heavenly spectacle—*nubes suscepit eum ab oculis eorum*—a cloud received Him out of their sight, and suddenly hindered their being able to behold Him any longer. This mysterious cloud came between them and their Master and thus dimmed their sight, to show that in this life we, who are but pilgrims and travellers, cannot enjoy for long the consolations arising from the contemplation of the divine mysteries, but we only catch a passing glimpse of their beauty. It is the wish of Our Lord that solid virtue should be acquired amidst darkness and dryness and desolation. Again, this cloud signifies that our vicious passions and our sins are the hindrances that come between God and the soul, and separate us from Him : *Opposuisti nubem tibi*—Thren. iii. 44—*Thou hast set a cloud before thee*. All the vicious and ill-regulated affections of thy heart are so many clouds that hinder thee from raising thy heart after thy Lord and enjoying His heavenly favours.

III. Consider that whilst the disciples were still wistfully gazing on the skies, accompanying their Lord in His triumph, they beheld two angels appear, who said to them : *Quid statis aspicientes in cælum?*—*Why stand you looking up to heaven?* Whosoever is called to the apostolic ministry must not tarry in the height of contemplation, but hurry on to the toils of his charge, to works of charity on behalf of his neighbour, and to the exercise of virtue. But if the disciples are reproved for remaining inactive in the contemplation of the wonders of God, what blame does

not he deserve who idly passes his time in trivialities and amusements, neglecting meanwhile to perform what he ought, and in the manner he ought? Bear in mind that thou art a pilgrim during the short span of thy mortal life, and that in thy character of pilgrim thou must press forward *de virtute in virtutem*—Ps. lxxxiii.—*from virtue to virtue*, and not spend thy time uselessly, because before long Christ will come again with the same majesty as He on this day ascended into heaven: He will appear before thee as thou breathest thy last breath to bestow on thee a reward for what thou hast done well, or to inflict punishment for what thou hast done amiss—but bethink thee, a reward or a punishment that will never end.

FRIDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

Ascendit Deus in jubilatione, et Dominus in voce tubæ.
—Ps. xlv. 6.

God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of trumpet.

I. CONSIDER the triumphant entry of thy Redeemer into heaven, followed by those numerous companies of prophets, patriarchs, and holy souls, just released from Limbo. See how all the choirs of angels press forward to meet the triumphant Saviour, and how, lost in amazement at such exceeding glory, they sing in loud chorus: *Quis est iste qui venit de Edom, tinctis vestibus de Bosra—iste formosus in stola sua, gradiens in multitudine fortitudinis suæ?*—Isa. lxiii. 1—*Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra—this*

beautiful One in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength? But even greater was the amazement and joy of those blissful souls on seeing themselves transferred from the darksome prison of Limbo to the dazzling mansions of Paradise, and they exclaimed: *Quam dilecta tabernacula tua Domine virtutum! concupiscit et deficit anima mea in atriu Domini*—Ps. lxxxiii. 1, 2—*How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.* With what heartfelt thanksgiving did they not praise their loving Redeemer, and rejoice at all they had suffered on earth, all appearing to them now as a dream—a mere nothing in comparison with the reward of eternal glory it has won for them, exclaiming with the Psalmist: *Lætati sumus pro diebus quibus nos humiliasti; annis, quibus vidimus mala*—Ps. lxxxix. 15—*We have rejoiced for the days in which Thou hast humbled us; for the years in which we have seen evils.* If thou wert frequently to raise thy mind to thy heavenly country, and didst fix thy affections there, ah! how light and shortlived would not all the sufferings of this life appear to thee!

II. Consider also, amidst all the rejoicing of the saints and angels, what a thrill gladdened the Sacred Heart of Jesus Himself at having, to His own exceeding glory, opened heaven again to man, which for five thousand years and more had been closed against the sons of Adam; at having wrested from Satan the power he had gained on earth, to the utter ruin of souls, and at having laid open, by His teaching and His holy example, the true path to eternal salvation. Wherefore, on offering these souls to the Eternal Father, as the spoil He had snatched from hell, He might well say: *Pater, manifestavi nomen tuum hominibus, et te clarificavi super terram: opus consummavi quod dedisti mihi ut facerem. Et nunc clarifica me, Pater*—Joan. xvii. 4—*Father, I have glorified Thee on earth: I have finished the work*

which Thou gavest Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me, O Father ! Happy wilt thou be if thou shalt be able to say as much when thou art presented to God Almighty after thy last breath. But, meanwhile, take heed to the manner in which thou obeyest thy Lord and seekest His glory, and to the zeal with which thou promotest the weal of thy neighbour, and dischargest thy own duties, so that thou mayest not be direfully disappointed at that dread hour.

III. Consider how, after the Eternal Father had graciously accepted the welcome offering of these ransomed souls, He caused His Divine Son to seat Himself at His right hand and receive the homage of the angels and of all creation ; and, in virtue of the supreme power which was His own as God, and which He had won for Himself as man, He assigned to these souls the thrones of glory from which Lucifer and his companions had been driven, the rank of each being in proportion to each one's merits, and a vast number still remaining vacant for the predestined. Whether or not thou be amongst the number, thou canst not know for certain ; but thou mayest entertain good hopes that such is the case, if thou strivest to follow as closely as thou canst in the footsteps of Christ. He no sooner entered into His glory than He at once undertook the office of advocate on our behalf, and began to plead for us with the eloquent tongue of His precious Blood and of His glorified wounds : *Advocatum habemus apud Patrem*—1 Joan. ii. 1—*We have an advocate with the Father.* Put all thy trust, then, in so powerful an advocate, and endeavour to gain His goodwill ; beware of moving Him to anger, for assuredly thy cause will be utterly undone if this thy advocate were against thee.

SATURDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

Adorantes regressi sunt in Jerusalem cum gaudio magno.
Luc. xxiv. 52.

And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy.

I. CONSIDER how, before coming down from Mount Olivet, the disciples fell on their knees to adore their Lord now reigning above, and with tears of tenderness, and with joyful hearts, kissed the footprints He had left in the act of ascending into heaven. This sentiment of joy was aroused in their bosoms by their faith, which was perfected in them on beholding the glorious ascension of their Divine Master, by the hope, now so firmly rooted, of one day meeting Jesus again in His kingdom, and of enjoying His presence with that perfect charity which caused them even then to exult at the glory of their Master. Christ's ascension ought to kindle a like sentiment of joy in thy own bosom by means of a lively faith, a firm hope, and an ardent charity—those only sources of true joy ; but, to realise this happy result, thou must raise up thy mind to thy Divine Master, thou must fix thy desire on thy heavenly country, thou must unite thy heart to Jesus, to [be consumed by the flames of His love.

II. Consider that, on their return from the mount, the disciples gathered together in the supper-room at Jerusalem to prepare for the coming of the Holy Ghost. *Intraverunt in cœnaculum, ubi manebant*—Act. i. 13—*They went up into an upper-room, where they remained.* One of the chief means to dispose thyself to receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost, is to enter into thyself by quiet of mind and retirement, avoiding all unnecessary business and distraction. Thou wouldst

do well to spend these days after this manner, awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost, in imitation of the disciples.

III. Consider how the Apostles, mindful of their own weakness, and of their grievous falling away at the time of Our Lord's passion, passed all these ten days in self-abasement, and in a thorough distrust of their own strength, waiting and longing to be endowed with strength from on high, and to enjoy the protection of heaven. In proportion as thou placest reliance on thyself and presumest on thy own strength, the less ready will the hand of that God be to help thee. *Who resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble—superbis resistit humilibus autem dat gratiam—* 1 Pet. v. 5. If, therefore, thou really desirest to be clad with strength from on high—*indui virtute ex alto*—keep thy eyes open to thy own weakness, and confess that of thyself thou canst do nothing. The Holy Ghost takes possession of and fills our hearts in proportion as they are emptied of self, and less clogged with earthly and worldly affections.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

Spiritus veritatis . . . testimonium perhibebit de me, et vos testimonium perhibebitis. . . . Absque synagogis facient vos.—Joan. xv. 26, 27 ; xvi. 2.

The spirit of truth . . . shall give testimony of Me : and you shall give testimony . . . They will put you out of the synagogues. . . .

I. CONSIDER the three effects foretold by Our Lord to His Apostles in this day's gospel, as shortly to be

wrought in them by the coming of the Holy Ghost. The first is—*Testimonium perhibebit de me—He shall give testimony of Me*: the Holy Ghost was to open the minds of the Apostles and give them an insight into the divine mysteries, and enable them to grasp His heavenly teaching. During the three years that the disciples listened to the lessons Christ was continually giving them, they were so dull and uncouth that, as S. Luke says of them, when on one occasion Our Lord was addressing them in plain language about His passion, *Nihil horum intellexerunt, et erat verbum istud absconclitum eis—Luc. xviii. 34—They understood none of these things, and His word was hid from them.* All the discourses they heard over and over again from their Divine Master about crosses and sufferings were quite beyond them, and they did not understand a word of it all. But on the coming of the Holy Ghost, oh, how thoroughly they understood the worth of the cross, and what a clear insight they had into the sublimest mysteries! *Spiritus omnia scrutatur, etiam profunda Dei—1 Cor. ii. 10—The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.* If thou wouldst acquire an intimate knowledge of the gospel-doctrine and penetrate the depths of the mysteries of religion, pray earnestly and constantly that the Holy Ghost may enlighten thee with His heavenly rays: *Veni sancte Spiritus, et emitte cœlitus, lucis tuæ radium—*

Come, Holy Ghost, send down those beams

Which sweetly flow in silent streams

From Thy bright throne above.

II. Consider the second effect promised to the Apostles on the coming of the Holy Ghost: *Et vos testimonium perhibebitis de me—And you shall give testimony of Me*; because when once enlightened themselves by his Divine Spirit, they were also to enlighten heathen nations by preaching the Gospel and bringing them to the faith of Christ. When a soul is filled with the

Spirit of God, it has this peculiarity, that it cannot rest at ease and be content with being good itself, but it must endeavour to benefit others as well. The Holy Ghost, thou must know, is likened to a river : *flumina de ventre ejus fluent*. His gifts are bestowed on us, not that they may remain idle and stagnant in the heart of him that receives them, but in order that they may be distributed abroad for the benefit of all. Thou must not content thyself by merely being good thyself, but thou must strive to help thy neighbour, if not by mounting the pulpit and running hither and thither on missions at home or abroad, at least by good example, by prayer, by privately exhorting thy neighbour to the practice of virtue, by words of warning, advice, or encouragement. However, this flow of words must not come from the lips only, but from the heart ; for they will prove of little avail if they are only empty sounds, but are not really meant and felt.

III. Consider that the testimony which the Apostles were called upon to render of Christ, by virtue of the coming of the Holy Ghost, was not to consist only in speech, but in an unconquerable endurance of persecution and outrages, undergoing all these and martyrdom itself with patience and with joy : *Ibant gaudentes a conspectu concilii, quoniam digni habiti sunt pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati*.—Act. v. 41—*They went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus*. In the same way as this cheerfully undergoing of suffering for Christ's sake was an unanswerable testimony of the truths preached by the Apostles, so also is it one of the clearest evidences of their having been endowed by the Holy Ghost with a courage and strength altogether heavenly. By this standard—namely, that of suffering, thou mayest discover how far thou art possessed of that fortitude of the Holy Ghost, which

renders the heart equally ready to endure or to labour for the glory of Christ.

MONDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

Oportet impleri Scripturam. . . . Episcopatum ejus accipiat alter.—Act. i. 16, 20.

The Scripture must needs be fulfilled . . . : His bishopric let another take.

I. CONSIDER that God Almighty stands in need of no man, and still less of thee. If thou fall away from thy state of life as a religious, and from the path of eternal salvation, He will find some one to replace thee, just as Matthias took that place in the Apostolate from which Judas fell away. Therefore, *tene quod habes ut nemo accipiat coronam tuam.*—Apoc. iii. 11—*Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.* But if thou wouldst hold fast thy crown, beware of abusing grace and the many powers thy Saviour has conferred on thee. Thou hast indeed but too good reason to fear lest by reason of thy ill correspondence and thy ingratitude He refuse thee those especial and efficacious aids which He is not in the least bound to give thee, but without which thou wilt most surely be lost. Alas ! how many are continually falling from even an exalted stage of holiness and learning, and are plunged into the abyss of hell !

II. Consider that Christ did not promote any one to the post of Judas' Apostolate, as He might well have done, during the course of the forty days He tarried with His Apostles after His resurrection, but

He left Peter to make this choice as head of the Apostles and of the Church assembled in the supper-room, and this in order to show the sweetness of that providence by which He Himself authoritatively governs both the Church at large, as also every religious community in particular, by the agency of lawful superiors. He acted thus to show that it was His intention that those whose duty it is to obey should recognise His divine authority in those that govern them, and also to hold out this election of the supper-room as a model of the manner and means to be employed in all similar elections. The means made use of on this occasion are reducible to two : the first, unity of heart and will, all being quite resigned and indifferent to what heaven should dispose in their regard, without any one's seeking to obtain the office of the Apostleship for himself ; the second means employed was prayer and earnest recourse to God—*Tu Domine ostende, quem elegeris*. So thou also must make use of these means of indifference and recourse to God in thy resolutions, if thou wouldst be sure of doing the right thing.

III. Consider how two candidates were proposed ; Barsabas in the first place, who was related to Christ Himself, and was a brother of two of the Apostles, and who by reason of his virtues went by the name of "the just," and in the second place Matthias. But the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was therefore preferred to Barsabas. Barsabas was in nowise vexed at one having been chosen in preference to himself, who was, however, his inferior from several points of view, nor did he neglect to exert himself in the discharge of the duties of his own position assigned him by Providence, acknowledging himself in his humility unworthy of so exalted a position as that of Apostle. Neither, on the other hand, did Matthias grow proud on seeing himself preferred, but sought with all the

more zeal faithfully to discharge his duties, bearing in mind that he had entered into that very office from which Judas has so miserably fallen. Learn from Barsabas to be resigned when thou seest thyself left in the background, and some one else, whom thou considerest thy inferior, put before thee, and from Matthias to be humble and fearful when thou seest thyself promoted.

TUESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE
ASCENSION.

Omnes erant perseverantes in oratione.—Act. i. 14.
All these were persevering in prayer.

I. CONSIDER how, although the disciples could not entertain the slightest doubt as to the actual coming of the Holy Ghost so often promised them by Christ, they did not for all that omit on their side anything that might dispose them to receive the fulness of His grace, and they gave themselves up to retirement and union in prayer. They were well aware that if we wish to receive those graces which Almighty God has decreed for us, we must on our side dispose ourselves to receive them; and that the better our dispositions are, the more abundant will be the grace we shall receive. for the measure of our preparation is wont to be the measure of His grace. Thou desirest that the Holy Ghost should come into thy heart; but desires are not enough without such works as will render thee deserving of Him. Strive, therefore, to get thyself ready, and dispose thyself for this coming, as the Apostles did.

II. Consider that the chief preparation of the Apostles consisted in persevering prayer—*perseverantes in oratione*—because prayer is the most efficacious means for disposing us to obtain favours from heaven, and most especially to obtain the Holy Ghost: *Dabit Spiritum bonum petentibus se*—Luc. xi. 13—*He will give the good Spirit to them that ask Him.* Almighty God has made it a rule to bestow the favours He has promised us consequently only upon our earnest entreaties: *Invoca me et eruam te*—Ps. xlix. 15—*Call upon Me I will deliver thee.* We honour Him by our entreaties, by recognising Him as the source of all our good: *Invoca me et honorificabitis me*—Ps. xlix. 15—*Call upon Me and thou shalt glorify Me.* In prayer we exercise various acts of faith, of religion, of humility, of confidence, and by repeated petition we come to make greater account of His gifts, in the same way as the worth of a merchant's goods is enhanced in his eyes by the increased demand made for them on the part of the buyers. Now, what use hast thou hitherto made of so efficacious a means? *Saltem amodo voca Me*—Jerem. iii. 4—*At the least, from this time call to me.* The least thou canst do is to exert thyself and make the best possible use of it during these few days to obtain the Holy Ghost.

III. Consider that, during the whole of those ten days that the Apostles were assembled in the supper-room, they never ceased from praying: *erant perseverantes in oratione*; and they would have continued to pray still longer had the coming of the Holy Ghost been further delayed. Thou, perchance, wouldst deem it sufficient in thy own case, in order to obtain so great a favour, to recite hurriedly a *Veni Creator Spiritus* during the course of the day, and then to expect that the petition thou presentest before the throne of God should be at once acquiesced in with the same promptitude as thou claimest from the perusal of a business

letter headed "Immediate?" No: *oportet semper orare, et non deficere*—Luc. xviii. 1—*We ought always to pray, and not to faint.* Thy Lord defers the bestowal of His favours, not because He does not intend to grant them, but because He wishes that by delay thy desire should increase, and that, by thy repeated acts of homage, thou dispose thyself to receive them in greater abundance. Learn, therefore, to avail thyself of delay on the part of Almighty God to redouble thy suit, obliging Him, as it were by main force, to grant thy petitions. *Orationi instate*—Coloss. iv. 1—*Be instant in prayer.*

WEDNESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

Erant perseverantes unanimiter in oratione . . . cum Maria Matre Jesu.—Act. i. 14.

They were persevering with one mind in prayer . . . with Mary the Mother of Jesus.

I. CONSIDER that the Apostles not only [persevered in prayer—*erant perseverantes*—but they persevered with one mind—*unanimiter*—and this in a twofold manner; they were concentrated in themselves by interior recollection, and they were united amongst themselves by the bonds of love. In the first place, therefore, they were concentrated in themselves because all their thoughts, all their desires, all their aims, were directed to one object—namely, to await and beseech for the coming of the Holy Ghost. Such ought to be thy preparation also if thou wouldst receive the Holy Ghost in the fulness of His gifts. Thou must not only be gathered, as it were, in thyself whilst actually

engaged in praying and entreating Almighty God, without allowing thy mind to be distracted and wander at random, but thou must also, amidst thy occupations in these days, keep thy heart and mind turned towards this event by frequent aspirations and ejaculations—like the mariner's compass, which always points to the North Pole ; and so all thy painstaking and all thy affairs will be directed to this one end—viz., to obtain the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

II. Consider that the Apostles were, moreover, united amongst themselves by union of prayer, begging of one accord for the accomplishment of the great event they were so anxiously expecting all together, but still more so by the bonds of mutual love—*Cor unum et anima una*—Act. iv. 32—*They had but one heart and one mind.* This spirit of union and concord is the most necessary means of all in a religious community for disposing its members to receive the Holy Ghost, because this Divine Spirit is essentially love itself, and binds together the souls He dwells in by a tie of mutual charity, and He resides not in hearts where disunion and discord reign. Examine thyself awhile and see whether perhaps there is lurking in thy heart any sort of rancour or aversion towards thy neighbour, whether thou puttest up with his failings, whether thou seekest to meet his wishes when thou art able, and whether thou strivest to keep peace and charity with all.

III. Consider that, in order to fit themselves to receive the Holy Ghost, the Apostles remained in the company of Mary the Mother of Jesus—*cum Maria Matre Jesu*—joining their entreaties with the prayers and merits of the Blessed Virgin. They well knew that, as she had, by her prayers and merits, hastened the coming of the Eternal Word when He clothed Himself with human flesh in her womb, so also, and with great likelihood, would she, by her prayers, hasten the coming of the Holy Ghost into their hearts. Do thou

also unite thy petitions with those of the Blessed Virgin in the supper-room, and beseech her to present thy suit to the Eternal Father, and render it successful in obtaining for thee the fulness and abundance of the grace of the Holy Ghost.

THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

Spiritus adjuvat infirmitatem nostram. Nam quid oremus, sicut oportet, nescimus. Sed ipse Spiritus postulat pro nobis.—Rom. viii. 26.

The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit Himself asketh for us.

I. CONSIDER that thou art under the greatest possible need of praying and begging from Almighty God, but in order to be heard it is above all needful to have humble recourse to the Holy Ghost, Who alone can teach thee how to pray, and beg properly. Of ourselves, we neither know what to ask for, nor how to ask for it—*quid oremus, sicut oportet nescimus*. The Holy Ghost alone can teach us what to ask for and how to set about it : *Spiritus sanctus docebit vos omnia*—Joan. xiv. 26—*The Holy Ghost will teach you all things*. Christ Our Lord has in the *Pater Noster* given us the perfect model of a prayer, but in a general way and without descending to particulars, whereas it is the province of the Holy Ghost, like a kind and patient teacher, to unfold our own particular demands and adapt them to our capabilities and especial wants : *Suggeret vobis omnia, quaecumque dixerō vobis*—Joan. xiv. 26—*He will bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you*. Whenever therefore thou goest to pray, be-

seech Him to direct and assist thee, saying the *Veni Sancte Spiritus* : and thus thy prayer will be made with fruit.

II. Consider that the Holy Ghost is not only a master that teaches the method of prayer theoretically, but that practically helps us to make it : *Adjuvat infirmitatem nostram—He helps our weakness.* These aids which the Holy Ghost is wont to give in prayer, consist in certain lights of the understanding and affections and desires of the loving heart, which are understood by those only who experience them. Ah, happy indeed wouldst thou be couldst thou arrive at enjoying, were it only a partial experience of them ! Earnestly beseech this loving Spirit to vouchsafe to grant thee these aids, because without them thy prayer will be like a body without soul—and with them it will become animated and full of life, and cause thee to ask and obtain every needful grace and blessing.

III. Consider that it is the office of the Holy Ghost not only to direct and assist us in prayer, but to plead, Himself, on our behalf as our advocate : *Postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus—He asketh for us with unspeakable groanings.* Christ also fulfils on our behalf the office of advocate in heaven at the right hand of the Father : *Advocatum habemus apud Patrem Jesum Christum—1 Joan. ii. 1—We have an advocate with the Father in Jesus Christ the just ;* but the Holy Ghost acts the part of advocate in our regard by speaking within us ; and as we say that He spoke in the prophets and in the Apostles—*Non vos estis qui loquimini, sed Spiritus Patris vestri, qui loquitur in vobis—Matth. x. 20—*so also does He speak in us and plead for us whenever we ourselves pray. Oh, how precious and efficacious is that prayer in which the Holy Ghost speaks and beseeches God : *Ipse Spiritus postulat pro nobis—The Spirit Himself asketh for us.* But prithee take notice that the Holy Ghost does not enlighten,

does not help, does not speak to all that go to pray, but only to those who do their utmost to pray well: *Adjuvat infirmitatem nostram—He helps our infirmity—* which means that thou must thyself do what thou canst to make thy prayers well; thou must make thy preparation, thou must withdraw thyself from other thoughts, thou must collect thy powers and apply thyself seriously. If thou dost thy part so far as thy weakness permits thee, it will be for this Divine Spirit to come to thy aid, to quicken thy prayer with life, and make it sure of obtaining the gifts of heaven, and especially of obtaining the fulness of the Holy Ghost.

FRIDAY AFTER THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

Cum complerentur dies Pentecostes, erant omnes pariter in eodem loco.—Act. ii. 1.

When the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place.

I. CONSIDER that although Our Lord had so often promised the coming of the Holy Ghost to His Apostles, He never informed them of the time of His coming. Although He might have conferred this gift immediately after His ascension into heaven, He nevertheless delayed it full ten days, whilst in the meantime the disciples remained gathered together in the supper-room, waiting and praying, without knowing when He was coming. A grand lesson is this to teach us to be indifferent and resigned to the Will of Almighty God, both as regards the time and the

manner of receiving the graces and favours we desire and ask for. God is our Master, and He is at liberty to bestow His benefits upon us when He pleases. Thou must strive to abandon thyself more implicitly to His goodwill, and not grow weary at delay, nor render thyself unworthy of His gifts by impatience, because thy Lord knows full well when is the fitting time to grant the favour thou askest and desirest : *Si moram fecerit. expecta illum*—Habac. ii. 3—*If He make any delay, wait for Him.*

II. Consider why the day of Pentecost was chosen for the coming of the Holy Ghost—the very day on which Almighty God had given the written law to the Jewish people on Mount Sina ; it was to betoken that whereas the law given on Sina was written on tables of stone—because it was a law of fear, as became a people still in a state of bondage—the new law of the Gospel, on the contrary, because it is a law of love, was to be written by the Holy Ghost on the hearts of the faithful : and they must observe it not from servile fear, but from filial love, raised as they are to the rights and dignity of children of God. How dost thou observe the counsels and precepts of the Gospel? from motives of slave-like fear, or induced by child-like love? Beg the Holy Ghost to come and engrave in thy heart the beauteous law of love, and then thy yoke will become lighter, and at the same time thou wilt derive greater benefit from it.

III. Consider how the Holy Ghost was given in the supper-room, which was a figure of the Church, because the Church is that ark wherein alone salvation is to be found, and outside of which there is no chance of being saved, as at the time of the deluge Noah's ark was the only means of escape. Whosoever lives in the bosom of the Church as becomes a true son of the Church, may hopefully expect the coming of the Holy Ghost, provided only he dispose himself to

receive Him. Hence we see that He was not given to the Apostles only, and to the first disciples, but a little later on even to some of those who had been partakers in the crime of Christ's death, but were converted by the Apostles: *Non est personarum acceptor Deus, sed in omni gente, qui timet eum, et operatur justitiam, acceptus est illi*, are the words of S. Peter—Act. x. 34—*God is not a respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh justice is acceptable to Him.*

WHITSUN EVE.

Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum.—Sap. i. 7.
The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world.

I. CONSIDER that, in the same way as the Eternal Father in His infinite goodness gave to the world the person of His only-begotten Son—*sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum Unigenitum daret.*—Joan. iii. 16—so also did He on this day, in the excess of His love, bestow on the same ungrateful world the Person of the Holy Ghost, through the merits and prayers of Christ, Who by the coming of this Divine Spirit gave the finishing stroke to the work of our redemption. What return dost thou endeavour to make for this exceeding liberality and tender love of the Eternal Father? What is thy readiness and generosity in throwing thyself heart and soul into what thou knowest will be agreeable to Him, and will further His honour and glory? By the Father giving thee the Son and the Holy Ghost, He has given thee His whole self, as He is not distinct from Them in

Substance, but only in Person. Surely dost thou not feel thyself bound out of gratitude to give Him thy whole self in return, and devote thyself entirely to His service.

II. Consider how deeply we are beholden to Jesus Christ for having by His prayers and by His merits obtained for us the Holy Ghost to enlighten our darkness, and strengthen our weakness with His gifts. Christ has taught us His heavenly doctrines, but unless the Holy Ghost gives us light and aptitude we cannot grasp a single one of them, any more than the Apostles did themselves before Whit Sunday. Christ has given us wondrous examples of virtue to guide our own line of conduct ; but without the grace of the Holy Ghost we shall never succeed in stirring ourselves up to imitate Him. Christ has raised aloft the standard of the cross to encourage His followers to scorn the charms of this life and embrace the irksomeness of suffering ; but for such an undertaking as this we need to be strengthened by the Holy Ghost. Thank Our Lord for having bestowed on us this great gift, which is so necessary to strengthen our weakness and misery, and make every possible effort on thy side to obtain it.

III. Consider that, with a view to producing in us these happy results, the Holy Ghost is given to us *ut maneat in vobis*—Joan. xiv. 16—that He may abide in our spirit as the soul resides in the body. The soul, by its indwelling in the body, quickens it, and by means of the animal and vital forces, gives it strength to move itself, and also, in conjunction with the soul, enables it to perform those functions which are proper to man. So, likewise, when the Holy Ghost takes up His abode within us, He quickens us by His sanctifying grace, and invigorates us by His gifts and holy inspirations, and at the same time incites us to action by the increase of those virtues proper to man

elevated to the supernatural state of grace. See what a difference there is between a live body and a corpse. Such also is the difference between a soul that is possessed by the Holy Ghost, and one that is deprived of His presence. Pour out thy heart in earnest prayer to this Divine Spirit, and beg Him to come and take possession of thee—*Veni Sancte Spiritus*—and so thou wilt become a different person altogether, as happened to the Apostles : *mutaberis in virum alterum*.—1 Reg. x. 6—*thou shalt be changed into another man*.

WHIT SUNDAY.

" Factus est repente de cælo sonus tamquam advenientis Spiritus et apparuerunt illis dispersitæ linguæ, tamquam ignis, seditque supra singulos eorum.—Act. ii. 2.

Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming and there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them.

I. CONSIDER how, on the coming of the Holy Ghost on the disciples in the supper-room, He first made Himself heard by a thunder-like noise in the heavens as of the rushing of a furious wind, which startled the disciples, and prepared an entrance into their hearts. This is the fashion in which the Spirit of God is wont to dispose a soul to receive Him : He sends beforehand the thunders of His voice and the wind of His mighty inspirations, by means of which it is aroused, and gets itself in readiness for the coming of this divine guest ; but if it turns a deaf ear to His voice and to His inspirations, and goes on sleeping in its negligence, the Holy Ghost will most certainly not enter there when

He finds the door of the heart closed against Him. To what extent art thou ready to give ear to the thunders of God's inspiration? Abhor thy past negligence, and for the future arouse thyself more thoroughly on hearing the loud voice of grace if thou wishest the Holy Ghost to come upon thee.

II. Consider that, after the noise of the thunder had ceased, the Holy Ghost came down and settled over the heads of each of the disciples under the appearance of fire, and in the shape of tongues, to betoken that as it is the property of fire to cleanse, enlighten, and enkindle, so also this fire of the Holy Ghost came into the supper-room to cleanse them from all earthly attachments, to enlighten their minds and enkindle their hearts with heavenly love. He came down in the shape of tongues to give the Apostles to understand that this fire was given to them that they might scatter it, by means of preaching the gospel, amongst all the nations of the earth : *linguis ut essent proflui*, as the Church sings. It behoves thee to crave for this divine fire with an earnestness that corresponds to the need thou hast of it to purify thy affections, to enlighten thy mind, and enkindle thy heart with divine love. If, in addition to this, thou art found worthy of receiving this fire in the shape of tongues by active employment in the Apostolic ministry, and in promoting the salvation of souls, see that thou exercise thy ministry to thy own profit.

III. Consider that, whereas one of the properties of our terrestrial fire is that it will not settle down and remain at rest, but is ever in motion, and has always a tendency to rise aloft, it is just the reverse with this heavenly fire, its distinctive peculiarity being that it comes down from on high, and settles quietly in the hearts of the faithful : *Seditque supra singulos eorum—and it sat upon every one of them.* It comes down from on high because—*omne datum optimum et omne donum*

perfectum de sursum est—Jac. i. 17—*Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above.* It settles permanently, because the Holy Ghost never quits our souls unless He be driven thence through our own fault : *manet vobiscum in æternum.* It settled on the Apostles with an even greater hold on account of their being confirmed in grace. It is to be hoped that thou also hast on this sacred day received this Divine Spirit in some shape or form, and that He has enlightened thy mind and enkindled thy heart with His love. But what will it avail thee, unless thou carefully seek to keep Him with thee, so as to allow Him to make a lasting abode with thee, and not oblige Him to leave thee through thy own fault.

WHIT MONDAY.

Et repleti sunt omnes Spiritu Sancto.—Act. ii. 4.
And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

I. CONSIDER what were the dispositions of soul that the coming of the Holy Ghost wrought in the Apostles. The first effect was in their intellect, which, in consequence of being enlightened by a strong supernatural light, was enabled to discover the falsehood of the maxims of the world and the truth of the maxims of eternity; they were enabled to see clearly the vanity of the fleeting goods of the present time, and the importance of the happiness that awaits us in the future : so much so, indeed, that whereas formerly the Apostles disputed amongst themselves who should hold the first place—*quis eorum videretur esse major*—Luc. xxii. 24—after they had been enlightened by the Holy Ghost, they esteemed him as the most highly honoured who was the worst treated and the most

despised for Christ's sake. Thou oughtest at least to desire that thy own mind be illumined in this truthful light, which has hitherto been so dimmed in thee by habitually looking upon the esteem of men as a great gain, and by being so sensitive to human respect in thy intercourse with others, and by so often ruling thy conduct by worldly principles and maxims. Beg the Holy Ghost to enable thee with a ray of His penetrating light to recognise thy mistake, and to change thy principles and ways of thinking.

II. Consider the second effect that the Holy Ghost wrought in the hearts of the Apostles. Whereas they were at first so fearful and timid that they all disgracefully forsook their Divine Master at the time of His passion, and Peter, the head of them all, more shamefully still denied Him at the mere idle talk of a silly maid-servant—now, on the contrary, after the coming of the Holy Ghost, they all showed themselves to be so full of courage and fearless, that they devoted all their energies to the work of preaching the glories of the Crucified One in the full light of day, regardless of the insults, the threats, the stripes and tortures they underwent for Jesus' honour and glory. Oh that one spark of this divine fire, which so inflamed the hearts of the Apostles, might find its way into thy heart! It would suffice to work such a change in it that thou wouldst become a generous lover of the cross to the same extent as thou hast in the past been anxious to procure thy own ease and ready to shrink from the slightest inconvenience. Thou wouldst then be as willing to embrace sufferings in order to please thy Lord as thou hast hitherto been prone to self-indulgence in order to please thyself.

III. Consider the third effect which the Holy Ghost wrought in the Apostles, which was to change their language: for if at the beginning all their conversation turned upon worldly topics and temporal interests

—and they even went so far as to chime in with Judas in blaming the generous piety of Magdalene when she anointed Our Lord with precious balms—now their speech was all heavenly discoursing of the greatness of God and of the glories of Jesus: *Loquebantur magnalia Dei*—Act. ii. 11—*They spoke of the wonderful works of God.* Examine thyself as to what thy speech has hitherto been, and reflect how much thou art given to finding fault with thy neighbour and criticising his actions, how apt to make complaints against thy superiors and pass judgment against them. Beg the Holy Ghost to bestow on thee a different style of language, if not that of an Apostle, at any rate that of a religious, since as S. James says: *Si quis se putat religiosum esse non refrænans linguam suam . . . hujus vana est religio*—Jac. i. 26—*If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue . . . this man's religion is vain.*

WHIT TUESDAY.

Cæperunt loqui variis linguis, prout Spiritus Sanctus dabat eloqui illis.—Act. ii. 4.

They began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.

I. CONSIDER how when the thunder-like peal made itself heard all over the city of Jerusalem, a great crowd of people ran immediately to the spot, some drawn by curiosity, others by heavenly inspiration; and the Apostles, now full of zeal, began at once to fulfil their task of preaching the greatness of Christ. Admire here the sweet providence of Almighty God in calling together the people by means of that loud

peal, to listen to and be converted by the preaching of the Apostles ; and ponder also on the means employed in such gentle ways to draw thee to the religious state and to incite thee to perfection, though these means have been in great measure overlooked by thee. See also how the Apostles did not for a moment keep that gift idle which they had received from the Holy Ghost, by co-operating in the salvation of souls. Now, just as it would be an act of great pride for any one who is not furnished with the requisite virtue to wish of his own accord to undertake the Apostolic ministry on behalf of his neighbour, so also is it a serious reproach for one who is called to exercise it either by the interior attractions of Our Lord or by the dispensation of superiors, to neglect it, or allow it to remain inactive through negligence or indolence. To which class dost thou belong ?

II. Consider how the Apostles set about the ministry of preaching : *Loquebantur, prout Spiritus Sanctus dabat eloqui illis—They spoke according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.* They preached at the instigation of the Holy Ghost, not from any motive of vainglory or self-esteem, but from a pure desire and intention of giving glory to God and of making known to the people the greatness of the Crucified One. They preached the Word of God in sincerity, without interweaving a tissue of poetical figures or far-fetched metaphors, and without distorting the meaning of the Scriptures merely to show off learning and genius : *Non adulterantes verbum Dei—2 Cor. iv. 2—Not adulterating the Word of God.* If thou shouldst perchance be employed in the ministry of preaching, thou hast here a great lesson to learn, and, it may be, also, gr. at reason to upbraid thyself. But in whatever employment thou art occupied, strive ever to keep thy intention directed to God in all thy undertakings, and to preserve in thy behaviour a mien becoming a religious

and such as will edify thy neighbour ; otherwise thou wilt hear it said of thee : *Seminastis multum et intulistis parum*—Ag. i. 6—*You have sown much and brought in little.*

III. Consider how when the people saw the Apostles, whom they knew to be poor fishermen, uncouth and unlettered men, speak nevertheless with so great wisdom, and expound the mysteries of religion with such real eloquence, and proclaim the glories and the divinity of Jesus crucified with such glowing warmth of soul, causing themselves moreover to be heard in so many different languages, they were exceedingly astonished and puzzled, and exclaimed : *Quodnam vult hoc esse ?—What meaneth this ?* However, there were not wanting some who turned their zeal into ridicule, and put them down as drunken fools, just as though wine could have possibly infused into them the gift of tongues and such heavenly wisdom. But it is not to be wondered at that in the world there should be always some who will cry down virtue and sneer at even the holiest of works. Beware of being too ready to blame and condemn the actions of thy neighbour ; it is so very easy to judge unfavourably of the proceedings of even the most virtuous ; and take heed lest, by constituting thyself judge in what does not concern thee, thou render thyself liable to a rigorous sentence at the judgment-seat of Almighty God.

WEDNESDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK.

Stans autem Petrus . . . levavit vocem suam, et dixit,
etc.—Act. ii. 14.

But Peter standing up . . . lifted up his voice, and spoke to them.

I. CONSIDER how, on seeing themselves laughed at by

the crowd, and hooted like fools, the Apostles did not withdraw from their undertaking, nor did they give over preaching the wonderful works of God, but they only took occasion from the mockery and taunts of the people to teach and expound the mysteries of God with all the more energy. The strongest proof one can have of a truly apostolic spirit, is to seek after the glory of God and the good of souls, without minding or heeding the scorn and jeers of worldlings. But, alas ! how far removed is thy conduct from this ! thou, who art so ready and willing to exercise those ministries in which thou thinkest to gain renown, and immediately withdrawest thyself when thou art wanted to undertake anything which thou fearest may entail a loss of reputation. By such conduct thou givest very clear signs that the aim and object of thy undertakings is not to toil after the glory of God, but to pander to thy own self-love.

III. Consider how Peter, the head of the Apostles, with a wisdom more than human, made all the assembled crowd understand and know that they were not drunk with wine, but were rather under the influence of the heavenly Spirit promised by God through the prophet Joel, and at the same time, with marvellous boldness, he reproached them to their very face with the crime of Deicide, of which they were guilty by having executed sentence of death against Jesus, the true Son of God, now gloriously risen from the dead. He did this with so much warmth of soul, that all his audience remained ashamed of themselves, and convinced of their error, so that, whereas in the beginning the Apostles were passed off as drunken men, they were afterwards acknowledged to be masters of heavenly doctrine. See what is the fruit he may look for who has in his heart the true Spirit of God, and who preaches the Word of God with a holy freedom of speech, without heeding or fearing the suggestions of human respect : *Ubi Spiritus,*

ibi libertas—2 Cor. iii. 17—*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* If thou art engaged in this ministry, learn from the Apostles how to exercise it ; if thou art not so employed, beg Our Lord to give a truly apostolic spirit to those who are engaged in it ; and do not meanwhile forget to help and edify thy neighbour in thy daily conversation. If at times thou art taunted on account of thy pious discourses, thou wilt in the long-run be the more esteemed in consequence of them.

III. Consider what was the consolation and joy the Apostles experienced on seeing three thousand people converted on the same occasion, in honour, we may suppose, of the Holy Trinity, as on another occasion five thousand were converted in honour of the five wounds of Jesus. They did not grow proud by reason of these conversions, nor did they in the slightest degree get vainglorious, but they attributed all their success to the efficacy of the blood of Christ, Who had decreed that it should be available for the benefit of even those who had been parties to His death, and in virtue of the prayer He moaned forth on the cross : *Pater, ignosce illis*—Luc. xxiii. 34—*Father, forgive them.* When it is permitted thee to reap some fruit from thy endeavours in behalf of thy neighbour, be pleased at it by all means, and rejoice at the glory which accrues to God ; but take care to attribute all thy success to Him, without priding thyself on it, and bear in mind the fact that without the especial aid of Almighty God thou wilt never be able to work the slightest good, either on thy own behalf, or on behalf of others : *Sine me nihil potestis facere*—Joan. xv. 5—*Without Me you can do nothing.*

THURSDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK.

Erant perseverantes in doctrina Apostolorum, et communicatione fractionis panis, et orationibus.—Act. ii. 42.

They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

I. CONSIDER what was the mode of life followed by the first Christians on their conversion to the faith. They were ever ready to hearken to the doctrine and teaching imparted to them by the Apostles. They daily approached the altar to receive Holy Communion, and they steadfastly persevered in the exercise of prayer, whether vocal when assembled together, or mental at their own homes. See here a model on which to mould thy own conduct if thou wouldst lead a spiritual life. The minds of these first faithful were enlightened with the Word of God, and their hearts were strengthened and hallowed by their devout frequenting of Holy Communion, whilst, by means of their constant prayer, they led a life more like that of the angels than of men. If thou dost not experience the same effects in thyself, it is a sign either that thou lovest sight of these means, or else that thou dost not make use of them with befitting care and diligence.

II. Consider how the first faithful were inspired by the Holy Ghost to embrace evangelical Poverty, casting all their riches and the price of their lands at the feet of the Apostles, in order to live in common : *habebant omnia communia*—Act. ii. 44—*they had all things common*. This complete detachment from, and surrender of, all earthly goods, which is the groundwork of evangelical perfection, was exactly observed by the first Christians, as may be gathered from the sudden punishment of death inflicted on Ananias and Saphira, who pilfered

a portion of the purchase-money they had brought the Apostles as the full value of the sale of their property. In imitation of the primitive Church, all Religious make profession by solemn vow of their detachment from and surrender of their property, in order to lead a life disengaged from the cares and attachments inseparable from the possession of earthly goods, and be more at liberty to give undivided attention to the acquisition of heavenly goods. But how is this all-important vow observed by thee? Art thou content with the common maintenance provided for all, or art thou ever on the look-out for more dainty living and greater comfort? Dost thou realise the fact that all thou hast the use of belongs to the community, or dost thou keep it with attachment as though it were thy own property? If it happens that thou hast the management of money matters, art thou particular in asking the necessary permissions? If thou carefully siftest thy conduct, thou wilt doubtless find great matter for self-abasement.

III. Consider how strong was the tie and bond of perfect charity that existed amongst the first Christians, who lived together as though they had but one heart and one soul—*cor unum et anima una*. It was precisely by this mutual love that they were generally recognised as disciples of Christ by the Pagans, who exclaimed in utter amazement, as Tertullian tells us: *See how they love one another, see how they are ready to die for one another!—Videte ut invicem se diligant: videte ut pro invicem mori sint parati*. To what extent does this badge, this distinctive mark of the followers of Christ, flourish in thy heart? How dost thou maintain peace and harmony with thy neighbour? Remember that it is not enough to keep this love shut up in the heart only: it must be outspoken and manifest to all, as our Divine Master has declared: *In hoc cognoscent omnes, quod discipuli mei estis, si dilectionem habu-*

eritis ad invicem—Joan. xiii. 35—By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.

FRIDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK.

Principes sacerdotum denuntiaverunt Apostolis, ne omnino loquerentur, neque docerent in nomine Jesu.—Act. iv. 18.

The chief priests charged them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus.

I. CONSIDER how, as the number of the faithful kept on increasing in the city of Jerusalem by reason of the preaching of the Apostles and the wonders they worked in the name of Jesus, the chiefs of the synagogue bestirred themselves, and commanded the Apostles to dare no longer to preach the resurrection and divinity of Christ. Since they themselves were unwilling to admit Christ to be the Son of God, though they well knew He had gloriously risen from the dead, they were also exceeding loth that the people should recognise Him as such. We see here in the very infancy of the Church the beginning of those continued persecutions to which it was subjected by the enemies of Christ with ever-increasing fury for several centuries. And, forsooth, our own times have not seen the end of the Church's persecution, for though we be free from the violence of tyrants, there is no lack of such as persecute and deride virtue : *Omnes qui pie volunt vivere in Christo Jesu, persecutionem patientur—2Tim. iii. 12—All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* Do not, therefore, flatter thyself that even in the cloister thou wilt be able to

give thy whole attention to acquiring perfection without any contradictions either from thy brethren within or from gainsayers without. This sort of ordeal serves only to fine and purify the virtue of those who are engaged in the holy work of furthering God's cause and the welfare of those around them.

II. Consider how the Apostles were in nowise alarmed at the threats of the chiefs of the synagogue, nor did they on account of their prohibition refrain from preaching the resurrection and divinity of Christ. They openly avowed that they were bound to obey God rather than man, and that it was not in their own choice to leave off preaching and bearing witness to the prodigies and glories of Christ which they themselves had seen—*Non est justum vos potius audire quam Deum*. Take a lesson from this answer of the Apostles of the firmness with which thou oughtest to behave in the service of God when at times any one opposes thee or strives to gain thee over from a virtuous course of action. Say : I am determined to obey and seek to please God rather than man. If thou fixest this principle well in thy mind, thou wilt overcome all human respect and gain the victory over those that harass thee.

III. Consider how, when the chiefs of the synagogue saw that the Apostles utterly disregarded all their threats and inhibitions, they condemned them to undergo the disgraceful punishment of scourging. And how did the Apostles act in consequence of this punishment and disgrace ? They went from the court full of joy and contentment at having been accounted worthy of undergoing suffering for Jesus' name sake, and continued to preach with greater zeal than ever : *Ibant gaudentes a conspectu concilii quoniam digni habiti sunt pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati*—Act. v. 41. Should it ever be thy lot to have to undergo some disgrace or trial for having remained firm in thy de-

termination to obey and please God rather than man, count thyself truly happy! How shouldst thou rejoice, and proclaim thyself well pleased! But, alas! how often, through dread of a remark or an insulting word on the part of thy companions, or from some other motive of human respect, hast thou failed in observance of thy rule, or let go by some good work or virtuous undertaking in the service of God! Be ashamed of thyself, and beg the Holy Ghost to breathe into thy heart an undaunted courage like that of the Apostles.

SATURDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK.

Non est personarum acceptor Deus, sed in omni gente, qui timet eum, et operatur justitiam, acceptus est illi.—Act. x. 34.

God is not a respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh justice, is acceptable to Him.

I. CONSIDER that, after both the preaching of the Apostles and the faith of Christ had been haughtily rejected by the Jews, Almighty God prepared the way for the reception of both the one and the other by the Gentiles in the conversion of Cornelius the Centurion, a man imbued with the fear of God, given to prayer, and a great almsgiver: *vir religiosus timens Deum, faciens eleemosynas.*—Act. x. 2. Wherefore, in consideration of these his good works, he was warned by an angel to hearken to and embrace the faith as taught by the Apostle Peter. Turning now to thyself, reflect for what deserts of thine hast thou been so favoured as to be born in the times of Christianity, and to have received from God the gift

of faith in holy Baptism? *Donum fidei electum.*—Sap. iii. 14—the precious gift of faith. Thank Almighty God for so great a gift, denied to so many others. But how earnestly shouldst thou thank Him for having, without any deserts of thy own, chosen and called thee, not only to the possession of the true faith, but still further to the profession of the religious state, thus rendering the work of thy eternal salvation safer and easier for thee, whilst He has left so many others amidst the dangers of the world who are so much better and deserving than thou art.

II. Consider how, in order to convey an express intimation of His Will to S. Peter, to the effect that he should turn his attention especially to the conversion of the Gentiles, and leave the Hebrews alone in their obstinacy, Our Lord caused him to see in a vision a large sheet filled with unclean animals, and at the same time to hear a voice which said : *Surge, Petre, occide et manduca*—Act. x. 13—*Arise, Peter, kill and eat.* The Apostle understood not the meaning of the mysterious sheet, and replied : *Absit Domine, quia numquam manducavi omne commune et immundum*—*Far be it from me, Lord, for I never did eat anything that is common or unclean.* By this rejoinder Peter clearly showed that he had not grasped the mystery conveyed in this divine ordinance, but at the same time he showed his eagerness to carry out the law, inasmuch as he was not to be persuaded to break it at the invitation even of Heaven. But in thy own case, how often hast thou been inveigled by thy whims and fancies to break the laws and rules of thy Order? Happy wert thou if thou couldst truly say thou hadst never transgressed in the observance of thy rules, never allowed thyself any gratification contrary to the regulations of thy community!

III. Consider the answer that Peter got back again from Heaven : *Quod Deus purificavit, tu commune ne*

dixeris—That which God hath cleansed, do not thou call common ; giving him to understand that by those unclean animals were shadowed forth the souls of the Gentiles, and that since Christ had shed His blood to wash and hallow them, he ought not to put them down as unclean, but seek to cleanse them from their sins by means of faith and baptism, and incorporate them to the living Church of Christ. The meaning of all this dawned upon the Apostle when, shortly afterwards, he was entreated by Cornelius to instruct him and several others, and the Holy Ghost suddenly came down upon them. These same words, *Quod Deus purificavit, tu commune ne dixeris*, ought to urge thee on also, in thy endeavours to bring about the eternal welfare of even the most abandoned sinners, by leaving no means untried, whether by exhortation, by prayer, or by good example, according to the requirements of thy state, in order to gain them over to Christ, Who has purchased them at the price of His own precious blood.

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